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CHAPTER I.

LADY WINDYGATES'S INSTRUCTIONS TO BRAEHEAD.

‘AND, Braehead, you’ll see that young Windygates gets into no ill company. It is one thing to have his manners improved, and another to have his morals corrupted. It is one thing for him to acquire the last French polish, and another for an innocent lad to be introduced to French vices.’

‘I am not so sure that there is a great odds,’ said a gentleman who was not the person to whom the instructions were addressed.

The place was the white wainscoted parlour, with its evidences of gentility in satin-wood chairs and a jingling spinnet, in the country-house of Windygates.

The first speaker was Mrs. Wedderburn of Windygates, or, as she was best known to herself and her contemporaries, ‘Lady Windygates,’ the influential wife of the laird of a good estate in the south of Scotland, a century and a half ago, in round numbers.

The audience consisted of two persons. The one was Windygates, who did not see ‘a great odds’ between the improvement of manners and the corruption of morals. He was a ‘personable,’ middle-aged man, in his long-waisted coat, laced vest, and knee-breeches. He was well known to his own and succeeding generations as a man of active habits, a great planter of wood, rearer of cattle, spearer of trout, shooter of hares and partridges, drinker of toasts after meetings of the Justices and election gatherings. But he was a man of far less social weight than Lady Windygates, in

her well-preserved 'mode' gown and tippet, lace 'head,' and ruffles, was a woman.

The second listener, and the one to whom Lady Windygates spoke particularly, was a kinsman of the head of the house, Wedderburn of Braehead, a bachelor in the prime of life, of independent means—in all those respects likely to be useful to the elder branch of his family.

Braehead had disputed many a proposition in his day—indeed, the mere assertion of a proposition was often enough to rouse the latent opposition of a man hard-headed, logical to the last degree, cool, with a slow-blooded coolness, and good-natured, with the imperturbable good nature bred of a complacent sense that his neighbours were idiots and wisdom dwelt with him. His philosophy was so perfect and unassailable on all sides that it had gauged heaven and earth, discovered their secrets, and brought them within the bounds of his reason. Such a man could afford to be hated by his more impassioned, enthusiastic, devout countrymen and women with a blind hatred, and abused with an abuse wide of the mark. For he was as thick-skinned as his vision was clear and cutting like a diamond, so far as it went; he was as deficient in sympathy as he was destitute of imagination, and, as a natural consequence of reverence, clever without idealism—a materialist to the core.

But there was one obligation which Robbie Wedderburn of Braehead never denied, and that was the allegiance he owed to Windygates. Feudal rights still asserted their lingering sway over the man who had renounced the worship of a God, in whose existence he declined to believe without sensible proofs; who had no further feeling for a king than that to be entertained for a prominent figure in a nation's history, raised to prominence by extremely natural causes—namely, the folly and superstition which ruled the mass of mankind. This glaring inconsistency in Braehead was matched by another incongruity. He was not only good-natured; he was kind-hearted, in a constitutional, shame-faced way, of which his relations and neighbours reaped the benefit. They did not hesitate to reap it, though they inveighed against his heretical opinions in religion and politics, and regarded him as theologically in a very bad way. They made use of him without scruple, while they called him 'that poor heathen Braehead.' They did not content themselves with cherishing a sneaking kindness for him; they confidently entrusted him with

delicate commissions, which he discharged, if not to their entire satisfaction, certainly to the best of his ability.

Braehead was a very different man in physique from his cousin and friend Windygates. Windygates was a strapping long-limbed man. He had led a wholesome, open-air life, full of hard exercise. His colour was fresh, his blue eyes were keen, and he was not cumbered with more flesh than he could easily dispose of, though, in this respect, Lady Windygates outdid him, as she surpassed him in many things. She had been a beauty in her youth, but always on a small scale. She was now as lean as a well-bred, but undersized, greyhound. The effect produced by her presence, which was worthy of remark, arose from the dauntless spirit and determination of the woman that had worn thin the tabernacle which contained them.

But no amount of shrewd, daring speculation had wasted the superfluity of solid bulk with which Braehead was endowed. He was not far above the middle size in height, but he made up in breadth for what he lacked in height. He was a temperate man both in eating and drinking, as became his strong sense, but the sedentary habits in which he indulged had early developed and maintained a comfortable-looking amount of corpulence, which no mental conflict, no poignant regret for the creed learnt at his mother's knee, and the Christian's heaven on which he turned his back, had served to diminish. His rearing and his descent from sport-loving country lairds had doubtless done something to restrain the tendency before it reached an unwieldy, oppressive climax. From the same cause, probably, his full, beardless face, with its double chin, was pleasantly rosy, instead of sallowed o'er with the pale cast of thought. The absence of sunburn on his round cheeks and plump hands was the chief indication of a student who, when he was at home, sat more in his book-room, where he wrote as well as read, from which he spread abroad the tenets of a new gospel, than traversed his fields or climbed and descended the brae on the top of which stood his narrow, steep-roofed, white house, in its small grounds surrounded with gnarled fir-trees.

Braehead's plain brown suit and cambric cravat seemed to set off his stoutness and rosiness. Withal there was a certain clumsy dignity about the man born of the courage of his opinions, and of the fact that he had opinions to be courageous about. There was also something comical in the blooming bountifulness of aspect, the placid, well-nigh benign, outward well-being of the individual

who, beyond his kindred and personal friends, was either ardently admired and eagerly followed as an apostle of enlightenment and civilisation, or heartily detested and profoundly dreaded as one of the scourges of a backsliding country and an atheistical age.

The commission with which Lady Windygates was about to entrust Braehead was so serious and important a charge that one wondered how a lady who was so orthodox in her generation and so dogmatical in her orthodoxy could have ventured on running such a risk, but she was fortified and confirmed in her purpose by several weighty arguments. She had a large reliance on Robbie Wedderburn's honour as a gentleman and a Wedderburn, which should prevent his interfering with and damaging her work. She had a still greater faith in the excellence of the work itself, so that it might be held sufficient to defy danger. Lastly, she had no choice unless that of resigning a cherished plan. If she did not avail herself of Braehead, she had nobody else to fall back upon in order to carry out her scheme.

The great occasion was that of sending away young Windygates—not on a campaign in the Low Countries, for which Braehead would have been an utterly unsuitable Mentor; not on the grand tour, which would have implied too heavy expenses for Windygates to sanction, and too prolonged an association with an avowed Freethinker for even the most dutiful lad, the best instructed in the Shorter Catechism, the most guiltless of doubt, to sustain without injury. The proposal meant merely a few months' stay in Paris, where there was the finest Court, the grandest manners, and the latest fashions, in order that young Windygates might get rid of what was rustic and homespun in his tone and bearing, and come back the finished gentleman no less than the good Christian and sound Calvinist his mother desired him to be. She could not rest, poor soul, with his being an honest lad or a smart young fellow; he must be a mirror of distinction to the whole waterside.

Lady Windygates never dreamt of accompanying her son herself; none of the ladies up or down the Deer Water went farther than to Edinburgh, or, in rare instances, to London, to be presented to King George and Queen Caroline and see the playhouses—if the visitors' principles did not interfere with their enjoyment of the spectacle. She was too clever a woman to wish to tie her son to her apron-strings, though she liked to exercise her influence in putting the finishing touch to his education.

Windygates had not visited France, though he had been across the borders in his youth, and he had no inclination to repair to foreign parts in his middle age. For that matter he did not greatly approve of his son and heir, his only child into the bargain, going abroad and spending good money needlessly in order to get into unknown scrapes, and all with the unsatisfactory result in view that he might be licked into a French fop instead of kept a manly Scotch laird. At present young Allan was as fair a judge of trees, corn, and cattle, as good a shot, as dexterous a spearsman of salmon, and, at the same time, as clever with the rod and reel, as first-rate a football player, as nimble a dancer, as frank and truth-speaking a lad, as a pleased father could wish to see. What was to become of all these honourable attainments in Paris (as Windygates had heard of the city)? he asked himself ruefully. What practice could the French capital afford for what were equally the duties and delights of a Scotch laird's life? The lad would be clean spoilt. He would lose all his natural gifts, and gain worse than nothing to make up for the loss.

It was not so long ago, quite within Windygates's remembrance, that honest folk, who were sometimes of his own sturdy Whig opinions, and sometimes held the very opposite political creed, had to travel, just as the wind blew, whether they liked it or not, and bide in Holland or France, when the poor bodies were sighing sorely for the caller air and the rushing water, the bear and the oats, the saughs and the whins, and the heathery knowes of auld Scotland. Why should a birkie who had not to go whether he would or not, and could not tell what lay before him, quit the country of his own free will, or rather—for the young chap had little will in the matter—to satisfy the idle whim of a woman? She was his mother, and had been a good mother—Windygates would not deny that—and a good wife into the bargain. Windygates was far too just and generous to 'smother' Lady Windygates's honour, though he did hold her a little high-headed and masterful, like the rest of her kind—especially like a large proportion of the lairds' ladies up and down the Water; yet, when all was said, she was but a woman, full of a woman's fykes and flings about manners and fashions, as well as about the duty of attendance at the kirk and the impropriety of spending money in change-houses where he was in question, and the evils of Dalbeath Fair where the whole household were concerned.

But Windygates was too indolent mentally as a balance to his

bodily activity, and too much accustomed to allow Lady Windygates to decide what was good for the family, to interfere even for the boy's sake. His mother had looked after him hitherto in everything except what might be called—though it was not so termed then—his muscular development, and it did not occur to Windygates to deprive her of her authority at this hour of the day. Besides, young Allan was not without relish for the expedition, with its promise of novelty and adventure.

If his son was to go, Windygates was well content that it should be under the escort of Braehead. Not that the head of the house had the smallest sympathy with his cousin Robbie's heresies, but he had an immense faith in his kinsman's pawkiness as a man of the world, while he shared Lady Windygates's confidence in his fidelity to his mission. The last was in spite of the fact that the lady would have for many things preferred the parish minister, who had been her son's tutor, to be his guide among the pitfalls of Popery and infidelity. But the Rev. Andrew Brydone had a wife and a family as well as his parish of Deerholms to detain him at home; and it was candidly admitted by his greatest admirers that, though he might have successfully conducted a controversy with the Pope of Rome himself, the Rev. Andrew was not much more capable of keeping the contents of a purse of louis-d'ors together, and piloting his former pupil through the custom-house, the diligences, the inns, and the shops, not to say the brilliant society of Paris, than the last baby in the Manse cradle could have accomplished the task. So Lady Windygates consented to accept Braehead as a travelling tutor whose expenses were to be paid; and Braehead, who was a prudent man in money matters, caught at the chance of visiting Paris again without cost, and renewing his acquaintance with the Encyclopædists, for whom he entertained a genuine fellow-feeling and half-patronising regard—his nearest approach to reverence.

'There is another thing I have to say to you, Braehead,' said Lady Windygates oracularly, 'and mind I am putting you on your mettle here—you're to keep your profane notions to yourself. There is to be no tampering with my son's religion. You're to put no maggots of sinful doubt and presumptuous questioning into young Allan's head, or not a foot does he stir from this door in your company.'

'I'll comply with your conditions, madam,' said Braehead, in no way offended, but turning aside his head to conceal the smile

which flickered over his big, florid, hairless face. 'The truth will work its way all the same.'

'Hear to him,' cried the lady indignantly; 'as if he knew the truth any more than Pontius Pilate. As if the Lord could not take care of divine truth without the like of him! But you'll not tar young Allan with the same stick.'

'No frights, madam,' answered Robbie composedly, yet with the tendency to a grin still lurking about his substantial sagacious face, whose sagacity was only marred by its strong dash of conceit. 'To doubt or to question,' he explained deliberately, 'implies some thought on the subject in hand. Now I've yet to learn that the callant has any thought—that is, any to spare from his breeks and his shoe-buckles, his horse, and the tyke at his heels; least of all,' added Braehead, with a *souppçon* of malice, 'from the young lass for whom he bought a ribbon or a pair of mittens at Dalbeath Fair the other week.'

'What do you mean, Robbie Wedderburn?' cried Lady Windygates, with a gasp of indignation and alarm. 'I know of no young lass and no token that my son Allan bought her at the fair, which I should have been the first to hear of, had there been any such gallivanting going on. And I would have you to acknowledge that my Allan, young Windygates, is as intelligent a youth as is to be found in this part of the world.'

'I never disputed it,' said Braehead, totally unmoved by her heat; 'as for the lass and the ribbon or the mittens,' he went on demurely, 'I only employed them as figures of speech.'

'Then I would have you keep such figures to yourself, or for them that may like them,' said the lady sharply. The next moment she softened a little. 'You do not understand, sir. Ah! Braehead, if you had been a mother with an only bairn, you would have seen most things in a different light.'

'God forbid,' said the man, who did not believe in the significance of the word he used.

'You're a hardened auld sinner,' cried Lady Windygates, shaking her lace 'head,' and speaking in the tone of a woman who derives some subtle satisfaction, nay amusement, from the painful truth thus unceremoniously proclaimed.

'Nevertheless, madam,' said Braehead, as complacently imperturbable as ever, 'I'll do your behests to the best of my ability—I'll bring your laddie back as raw and prejudiced in his notions, and as unharmed in his behaviour, as I can manage it. I'm glad

to think, for the credit of a Wedderburn and a Calderwood' (quoting her maiden name), 'that young Allan is not a coof; but he is innocent enough for his sex and years, and his innocence shall not be defiled in my care if I can help it.'

'Aye, Robbie, to give the De'il his due, you've lived as cannily as your neighbours—not even your worst enemies can blacken you there,' said Windygates, once more breaking his silence; 'whether it has been for lack of temptation or from superior sobriety and decency, you yourself can best tell.'

'You had better give me the benefit of the doubt,' said Braehead drily.

'If it had been otherwise,' continued Windygates, beginning to walk up and down the room, 'I do not say what the lad's mother might have done, as she is here to answer for herself, but I can tell you I for one would have put down my foot on this haver of a visit to Paris. Even as it is, I think it would be more to the purpose to speak of your guarding a fellow of his years and condition from dicing and brawling like a young spendthrift and bully, and from wanton and wicked courses generally, than of protecting him from heresies that will go in at the one lug and come out at the other, since he is neither of an age nor of a turn to pay heed to them.'

'I flatter myself my son's virtue and discretion will stand the test,' said Lady Windygates loftily.

'Keep the woman!' Braehead relieved himself by a private unspoken protest. 'Is he *her* son any more than his father's, and has she taken out an exemption from error in his name? The fule woman, it will be a wonder to me if she is not brought to her senses without any fault of mine.'

'There are other safeguards,' said Lady Windygates, innocently unsuspecting of Braehead's reflections, 'though, of course, they are not to be mentioned in the same breath with a godly upbringing and the grace which is promised in such a case. The Countess of Lathones, who was three years in France with her man when he was in trouble about the last rising, has given young Allan a letter of introduction to one of the first families among the French quality. She was on terms of intimacy with the Duchesse de Châlons and her family. Some of them visited the Lathones at Queensmuir a year or two since. It was the year that we were not going into company, because of the death of Windygates's worthy mother, or I would have met them; and I would have seen them at the kirk, had it not happened that, being Romanists,

of course they did not go to the kirk. I need not say the Châlons command the entrance to the French Court at all times.' Lady Windygates, though she was a well-born woman, was not above referring to the Châlons and their Court favour with a mixture of pomposity and exultation, as of one who would say, 'Who can match that? What other laird's son in the neighbourhood can boast such an advantage as I have secured for young Windygates?'

'I fail to see what help that will be to Allan's measure of propriety, not to say of integrity,' Braehead was considering sardonically in his own mind; 'his most Christian Majesty is a disreputable old scoundrel if all tales be true, and very likely these Châlons are as brazen-faced and depraved a crew as he has about him. However, ignorance may be bliss here, and I need not try to dispel it. I'll get no thanks for my pains. I've been already forbidden to speak my mind.'

'It may be as well to let you know also,' continued Lady Windygates in her dogmatic way, which there was no contradicting, 'that I do not, and neither does Windygates there, I am sure,' she added, as if by a courteous afterthought, 'contemplate the possibility of any alliance between us and the Châlons, or other members of their circle, such as has been occasionally entered into between the Scotch and French nobility and gentry. It would not do on any account. We could not entertain it for a moment. The young lady's French origin and upbringing, together with her being a Papist, would utterly prevent it. Besides, I may tell you young Allan is as good as troth-plighted to my cousin Maisie Hunter of the Haughs.'

'It is the first word that I ever heard of it; I'm the lassie's principal guardian!' exclaimed Windygates, suddenly coming to a halt in his walk, sitting down on the most fragile of the satin-wood chairs, leaning back, and swinging himself to and fro.

'Look what you are about, Windygates,' his wife called him to order; 'my parlour chairs are not seats to jow upon like the big, clumsy, carved things in the dining-room and in your closet. And, now that you have heard that there is a prospect of marriage between Allan and Maisie Hunter, what have you to say against it?' she asked with discomfiting briskness.

'I have nothing to say against it,' admitted the laird, scratching his head, after he had recovered from the shock of so instant and direct a challenge. 'If the lad and the lass are willing when the time comes, I'll not stand between them. The Haughs is a

nice place, with a fine lie to the sun, grand for grazing purposes, though it does not match with Windygates.' He had found his tongue in the support of an idea far from displeasing to him, which had probably passed through his own mind ere now. 'Davie Hunter, come of the Polmood Hunters, was one of my oldest friends. Maisie is his sole representative, as Allan will be mine, and she is a fine lassie, well-favoured, with good parts and good principles. Her old Auntie Peggy has not cheated her of an excellent education both at home and in Edinburgh. But had you not better wait and see whether the pair incline that way before you settle matters for them?' the speaker caught himself up cautiously.

'Allan is barely of age, and Maisie Hunter is not out of her teens,' Windygates began again; 'if I recollect rightly the date of the funeral of her mother, who died at the bairn's birth. It was the snowy year, when so many sheep were smothered in the drift in Cairnie Cleugh. Mrs. Hunter's funeral had to be put off three or four days to let us get through to the old kirkyard at Kirkbeath, where he had a maggot that she should lie among his kin.'

'Well, I had nothing to do with the poor woman's funeral, and you may leave the sorting of my son and her daughter's marriage to me,' said Lady Windygates with dauntless confidence. 'It will be a capital down-sitting for Maisie, and I'm not sure but that young Windygates might do worse. I'm not speaking merely with respect to the estate, for nobody can say that I'm dead set on this world's goods, though the Haughs is a nice place, as you say, laird, and it is no more than fair that our son, who will get all we have, should claim a good tocher with his wife. But, apart from her bawbees, my cousin Maisie is not only a very bonnie lassie,' insisted Lady Windygates, ringing the changes on the much-thought-of damsel's attractions, 'she's just an uncommonly bright, sensible young creature, to whom I've taken a great fancy.'

'I should say it would be more to the purpose if it were young Windygates who had taken a fancy to the young lady,' Braehead took it upon him to hint—a hint to which Lady Windygates did not deign to reply. 'But, no doubt, madam, you do not speak without authority,' Braehead made the amendment, 'and I've to thank you for a piece of information that, as it lets me know what your plans are for my young cousin, will make me all the more alive to any danger of their being circumvented which I may be able to detect and ward off.'

'Thanks to you, Braehead, there is no danger,' said Lady Windygates composedly; 'my Allan knows better than to entangle himself in strange, forbidden bonds, when there is something so much better worth having in every way awaiting his home-coming.'

Lady Windygates had arrived at the end of her instructions at last. Braehead was at liberty to pursue his cogitations as he strode down the hill, striking into a by-path through the fields, which led up again to Braehead. 'It is odd,' pondered the philosopher, 'how like draws to like, and the same types reproduce themselves perpetually. Maisie Hunter of the Haughs is a younger edition of Ann, Lady Windygates, as she was at the time of her marriage. If two of a trade never agree, and the dowager lady survive her gude man and be spared to ripe old age, we need not look for much peace in the next reign at Windygates. There is not a more striking likeness between the father and the son, Windygates and young Windygates, though that is what one would naturally look for, than there is between these two women. But, when I come to think of it, there is a wonderful resemblance between man and man and woman and woman in this dead-alive corner. And invariably the women have the best of it. The grey mare is the better horse in the yoking. The fighting and the farming, the electioneering speeches and political riots, the keeping down of the game, big and small, the sitting over the bottle, may be safely left to the men—the ladies will not dispute their husbands' and sons' superiority in these lines—and it is a proof that the women are but simpletons after all, since they will look up to the men as so many Solomons where this superiority is concerned. But let it come to the management of a household, to looking after a family exchequer, to sending out sons and daughters into the world and settling them in life, and there would be a fine kettle of fish without the women. I've never put my head under the yoke, and never will, but I can see the truth well enough. I am not altogether clear if it is a peculiarity of the families on this waterside, or if it hold good throughout the nation, throughout humanity. Anyway, it would take my ten fingers to check off the lairds' ladies and farmers' wives in this parish and the next who are as clever hizzies and as good hands at ruling the roost in their different departments as Lady Windygates has shown herself in hers. Their name and fame will never die, for there is a younger generation, among

whom I'm safe to say is the heiress of the Haughs, growing up to take their place. Young Allan, you had better look to yourself, for you'll not be out of your mother's clutches before you'll be in your wife's, as your father has been in his wife's long ere your day. She'll take great care of you, it will all be for your good, you will thank her for it, if you have a heart of grace, every hour you live. At the same time, my fine lad,' finished Braehead, with a hitch of his obstinate bachelor shoulders and a twitch of his contumacious, yet ludicrously mild lips, 'you'll not call your soul your own without Madam's permission.'

CHAPTER II.

AN OLD FRENCH HÔTEL AND ITS OCCUPANTS.

BRAEHEAD and young Windygates had arrived in Paris—the older Paris, of which there are only scattered fragments to-day. It was the city of great family hotels, in their green courts and gardens within their walls and gates; of ancient battlemented palaces akin to fortresses, destined to be prisons crowded with strange prisoners before their part was played out; of numerous noble churches and religious houses, which, in spite of the Encyclopædists, survived to be gutted out in order to form halls for the assemblies, not of the learned, but of the brutally ignorant, the people's representatives, and their masters and mistresses for the time, the fierce rabble of the streets, the shrieking chafferers of the *halles*. It was the Paris of narrow filthy trottoirs and lamps swinging midway across them; of tall, crowded shops, and inconvenient corner quays, by which market boats and rowing boats jostled each other for places. Gilt coaches drove along, carrying superb gentlemen in velvet coats and lace ruffles, and exquisite ladies in brocades and plumes of feathers. Frocked monks, as well as priests in their *soutanes*, picked their steps in the *mêlée* among sharp-eyed workmen in out-at-elbow blouses and women with ragged skirts and pinched faces, dragging along children more meagre than themselves. The twin towers of Notre Dame looked down in solemn serenity on it all, and the clustered towers of the Bastille frowned grimly, for did not they mark the giant prison, with its wall within wall and labyrinths of cells, like a mighty spider's web, to which a King's Letter might send the most unus-

pecting citizen on an hour's notice, from which only the most tedious and one-sided of trials or another King's Letter could bring him back again?

Young Windygates was excited and delighted with what he saw, for everything was novel and striking to him. Braehead had seen it all before, besides getting peeps behind the scenes, which caused him to have his doubts—as he said, with national and individual caution—and to shake his big head in its somewhat diminutive wig.

The travellers put up at an inn familiar to Braehead, where he interpreted for his young friend, whom he kept carefully under his eye. Indeed, as Allan, in spite of the Rev. Andrew Brydone's extensive erudition, which he had made the most conscientious efforts to transmit to his pupil, could not speak a word to foreign humanity which foreign humanity could understand, though he could address horses, cattle, dogs, and sheep with a perfect mastery of the vocabulary invented for their benefit, he was of necessity tied to his kinsman. The younger man did not at first care to stray far beyond the sound of the voice which interpreted all his wants, whether of meat and drink or of purely mental aliment.

Braehead vindicated the trust reposed in him by doing his duty to young Windygates in the beginning as precisely as if the bear leader had been an elder of the kirk, and not next door to a heathen. He showed the lad the sights—the public buildings, the statues—especially that of Louis XIV. in the Place Vendôme, and that of Louis XV. ('Vice, riding on horseback') in the Place Louis Quinze; the quays, the squares, the gardens. Braehead even sat out and yawned through an opera to gratify young Allan. His guardian ventured so far as to take the lad to one of the meetings of a learned society, secure that, in young Windygates's ignorance of the language, he could pick up no audacious theory, catch no sneering epigram, which might endanger the perfect soundness of his creed. For that matter, poor stupid Allan was profoundly weary of the bony and grimacing metaphysicians and mathematicians with whom his companion was hand-in-glove. What the young man called their gibberish was doubly incomprehensible to him; and, though it might be an honour, as he was ready to admit—for he was ingenuous and modest, not brutally self-sufficient and arrogant—for him merely to look on their eager, ugly, yellow faces, he could have desired that the honour were abridged, or bestowed on a worthier recipient. He was tempted to wish himself back at Windygates, practising his flageolet, playing a game of bowls with

his father and a visitor, reading a page or two of the 'Annual Register' or the 'Scot's Magazine' to his mother, going out with Muirland Willie the game-keeper to have a shot at a wild cat, setting off for some gathering of young folk at a house-warming or harvest-home where he would dance till break of day.

It was a good deal better for young Windygates when the pair delivered their letter of introduction from Lady Lathones to the Duchess de Châlons. There they were detained first in the *porte cochère*, and afterwards in an ante-chamber, where a page in the Châlons livery took their open sesame and disappeared with it. Even when the page returned the sole result for the moment was that Madame the Duchess did not receive at that hour, and that she would communicate with them by a messenger—a beginning which was a little like a satire on French politeness. But Allan was decidedly impressionable through his senses as well as his heart. He walked away fascinated by the pictures, the tapestry, the mirrors, the gilt and carved furniture, the sweet scent of the flowers through the open window from the summer garden, though the travellers were in the heart of Paris.

And when the morning did come, with a perfumed note from the Duchess, her delay in receiving the strangers and the ceremony in which she was entrenched were amply atoned for. Even in the matter-of-fact rendering of Braehead, who translated the lady's gracious phrases, her response to Lady Lathones's appeal was full and free. She invited the two men whom she had never seen to be with her every evening she received, in order to become acquainted with her family and introduced to her circle. She announced that the Duke, her husband, and the Marquis, her son, would have the felicity of calling on Madame de Lathones's friends. She went so far as to add that she hoped her relations would induce the Scotch gentlemen to quit their inn and become for the rest of their stay in Paris the guests of the Châlons.

'What a kind woman! What an open house the Châlons must keep! Was there ever such hospitality?' demanded Allan warmly.

Braehead cleared his throat and tickled his right ear.

'We must wait on the lady, that is certain,' he said. 'As for the Duke and the Marquis, we'll wait till they call, which may be the day before we leave; or, if the gentlemen turn up sooner, you may depend upon it they will not keep us at home five minutes. However, as we have nothing to do with the fine cattle beyond

inspecting them like the rest of the marvels, and perhaps having them to fall back upon if we have a difficulty about Versailles, or get into any trouble, we may let them and their manners take care of themselves.'

Young Windygates had no objection to this course, since, in spite of Braehead's proving a true prophet with regard to the amount of time and attention which the two French noblemen spared to their Scotch visitors, one of these visitors was inclined to think the manners of his host, and especially of his hostess, the most charming in the world—far before anything he could have imagined.

Both the Duke and Duchess understood a little English, which was a rare accomplishment in that day, before any Anglomania had arisen in France. The origin of the accomplishment was that husband and wife had in their youth been brought into contact with many of the exiles at St. Germain, and that the couple had once visited England in the suite of their Ambassador, and had even made a descent on Scotland in order to renew old acquaintanceships. The smattering of English possessed by the heads of the house of Châlons, and courteously used for the visitors' benefit, was an inestimable advantage to Allan, inasmuch as it enabled his new friends to understand his first blushing and stumbling attempt at patchwork French. They listened to it without the ghost of a smile on their high-bred faces—unless such a frank, gay response to his half-vexed, half-amused, laugh at his tremendous mistakes as was the most successful thing for setting him at ease in all their bland graciousness.

It was of comparatively little consequence that the Marquis de Beauval was far less familiar with English and far less forbearing in following young Windygates's flounders among strangely-sounded vowels and more strangely used idioms than his parents showed themselves, since he was little at the Hôtel de Châlons. He was an officer in a regiment then stationed in Paris, and appeared to live chiefly at his quarters, and to have his own engagements, with an amount of independence of the paternal roof which caused the son of the Scotch laird to open his blue eyes widely.

Even Monsieur the Duke, though he resided in his own hôtel and was present almost every evening at his wife's receptions, so that the pair might have passed as a model French couple, had his apartments in the great rambling building entirely distinct from those of the other members of the family, appropriated to

his own use and frequented by his own company. Young Windygates had a difficulty in realising that the Duke and Duchess held the same relations to each other that were held by Windygates to Lady Windygates, who was at the heels of everything that concerned her husband, down to the length and strength of the points which knotted up his hose and knee-breeches, and the paying of his farrier's bill. When Windygates was within doors—which, to be sure, was seldom save at meal times, after nightfall, and in the worst weather—the couple were bound to be together, or constantly encountering each other. This was for the very good reason that the dining-room and Lady Windygates's parlour were common to both, and not a room in the house was sacred to its owner, be it man or maid, or exempt from tours of inspection, to investigate whether Ritchie or Pate, or Jenny or Ailie, were faithful in his or her office. The Wedderburns were only Scotch lairds of fair position: the Châlons were powerful French noblemen; but the difference between their *ménages* was not merely a difference of rank and state.

Young Allan did not pause to measure the comparative excellence of the two systems. A dim comprehension came to him, however, that the unbroken politeness, even the strain of gallant and witty compliment, that struck him so much in the intercourse of the elderly Duke and Duchess (elderly according to his reckoning), which formed so strong a contrast to his mother's pragmatical laying down of the law and brisk fault-finding, and his father's stolid indifference or gruff retorts, were only possible, in the highly civilised atmosphere of Paris, in a great house like that of the Châlons, in a division of forces and interests polished as steel, and as clear and cutting. That did not prevent the effects being delightful to a newcomer, full of balmy serenity which yet had its piquant elements, for this French race was very quick and bright, never lacking in keenness and cleverness, in lively emotions and desperate passions, with their tragic situations far below the surface, while always preserving the agreeable *convenances*.

Braehead might do what he liked, and he accepted the *carte blanche* quietly; but young Windygates was determined he should avail himself of his *entrée* to the Hôtel de Châlons. He would never fail to be present at Madam's evenings, where she softly made much of him, and helped him to enjoy himself. His mother wished him to have manners, and where was there a better school for learning them than with those friends of the Lathones to whom he had been sent, who deigned to notice and entertain him,

and did it so well and with so little apparent effort that, though he felt a clown in their company, still he was happy?

Braehead smoothed his smooth chin, gave a grunt, and left young Windygates to follow his devices so far as frequenting the Hôtel de Châlons was concerned. As to other resorts, his senior had his thumb on the lad, who mispronounced woefully his small amount of French words, and, though he had known his Cæsar and his Virgil, could no more fall back on Latin as a medium of conversation than he could fall back on Chaldee.

Further, Braehead had ascertained, by discreetly conducted inquiries, that of Madame the Duchess's daughters who were out of their convents the elder had been married a year ago, at the age of thirteen years, though she still resided with her father and mother, because the Comte de Haute-Blois, her husband of nineteen years, was with the army on the frontiers, and the young couple's establishment had yet to be formed. As for the second daughter, she was vowed to the Holy Virgin, and destined to be the future Abbess of Châlons. There was a young widow, a relation of the family, whom they called cousin, who stayed in the hôtel; but Braehead's informant—none other than the Major-domo—made a face when he mentioned Madame Ste. Barbe, and said that she did not count. She was only a poor relation, a hanger-on, with antecedents as smirched as such fine ladies' origins and actions often were, so that she needed the Duke and Duchess's protection, in return for which she entertained them when they wanted entertainment, and served them in various social ways which were open to her; but, as to terms of equality and matrimonial overtures, there was nothing to be feared from her. The Duke was a man of honour, and would not permit such a thing where a visitor, a foreigner, a gentleman introduced by an old friend, was concerned.

Braehead was satisfied that there was nothing at the Hôtel de Châlons which could endanger the interests of Maisie Hunter, of the Haughs, or rather of Lady Windygates's selection of Maisie for her daughter-in-law and successor. Young Windygates was disposed of with tolerable safety when his host and hostess were of the *haute noblesse*, owing some responsibility to members of his country-people, and when play did not run high in their house. Braehead was rather thankful to have his charge off his hands at times. The lad was not a bad lad, but he was like his kind, and there was very little in them, according to Robbie Wedderburn. What did young Allan care for the laws of the universe, or the laws

of nations, the enlightened political economy and the advanced physics, which were so much to Robbie Wedderburn?

The Hôtel de Châlons was a world of wonder to young Windygates, and its inner sanctuary was Madame's room. What would his mother—what would Maisie Hunter—think of its glass and gilding, its parquettèd floor and Turkey rugs, its luxurious fauteuils, its great bed in the alcove, its public toilet-table, its dogs and birds and flowers? How would small wizened Lady Windygates in her thrifty gown and tippet and lace hood look beside the tall and stately Duchess in her brocade with her towering *chevelure*? Instead of keeping accounts, spinning fine flax, concocting cordials and medicines, and converting the darning of the household linen into a fine art, the great lady contented herself with occasionally picking out the gold thread from bullion lace, and slowly raising a glittering pile at her side. She fanned herself with languid elegance or fitful fervour, she sniffed at a gold vinaigrette, or took snuff from a snuff-box set in brilliants. All the time she heard everything which passed around her, and guided the conversation unerringly—not stiffly dogmatising, according to Lady Windygates's habit, but exercising an unquestioned supremacy with a tact which was as delicate as it was irresistible. Young Allan was not disloyal to his home and his mother, but that did not prevent him from being dazzled by their opposite.

The Duchess was not handsome according to Scotch notions; if looked at without partiality, when she was silent and still, she was somewhat heavy-looking in her grandiose size, and not all the rouge and powder of the day could altogether hide the sallowness of her complexion, in keeping with the universal sallowness of hue which young Windygates and Braehead encountered in the faces they met on French ground. For the friends had not gone to Normandy, where there are apple cheeks as well as red and white pippins, or to the southern provinces, where the yellow is qualified by brown as in the African marigolds which the damsels of Provence sometimes wear in their dark hair in the *rondes* which the peasants dance on a fête day.

Young Windygates went to the most splendid Court in Europe, and saw a king who, when young, cooked, by fits and starts, in silver pots and pannikins, or took a turn at an embroidery frame, and, when old, was as depraved and cruel a cynic as any heathen Roman emperor of them all. The young man saw the haughty reigning favourite, and the Mesdames, the king's elderly daughters, who under the choice names of 'Rags,' 'Bones,' etc., were the

butts of their far from venerable parent. The honest lad was not particularly edified; not all the dignity of the King's hunt, the stately splendour of the Palace rooms, the glories of the terraced gardens, could compensate for the drawbacks they contained—patent even to a youth of one-and-twenty. But he was struck by the illustrious gatherings which met at the Hôtel de Châlons—the marshals, the abbés, the lieutenants of provinces, the playwrights, the poets, the ladies of the first quality and the most charming attributes, who were the men's contemporaries and their fitting mates. As young Windygates was never likely to cross their paths, and would not be worth reckoning if he did, they were for the most part graciously affable to him, and, as he was a modest unassuming lad, he was pleased by their affability, and grateful for it.

But the undoubted queen of the circle, whom he was proud to know, was his friend Madame the Duchess. Madame, with her grand air, her becoming languor, and her equally becoming vivacity, her swift smiles and frowns, her wide range of glances, her marvellous gestures, was a delightful person to watch. She was the most captivating of patronesses and friends. She would admit young Allan to her *petites entrées*, where only her secretary, confessor, hairdresser, and *femme de chambre* shared with him the mysteries of her earlier toilet. She would tell him the most delightful piquant stories in a mosaic of French and English, recalled for his benefit, which he could understand, of Royal progresses, of the return of great warriors from the wars, of the Scotch regiment and its valiant deeds, of Scotch families in exile like the Lathones, to whom it had pleased her to be a generous ally. When she saw how the listener sat enthralled by her eloquence she was charmed in her turn; she felt an agreeable, if not a unique sensation—made up of her gratification at exercising with the old success an old accomplishment, and of having won a fresh adoring servant. Nay, her quick sensibilities were really touched by the humility and sincerity of his homage, just as her eyes were pleased with his comely young manhood. For young Windygates was stalwart, fair, and ruddy, on the same lines as his father, and blonde, big, simple-hearted Scotchmen had always taken the Duchess's fancy. They had the same attraction for her that the upright, pure-minded young Count de Fersen had for the Frenchwoman of quality of another generation. Madame's eyes melted, her voice softened, in addressing Allan Wedderburn, and the term *mon fils* dropped naturally from her lips. The sound thrilled

him through; he was doubtful how Lady Windygates would have relished the invasion of her prerogative. Yet to be styled *mon fils* by this very fine lady and exquisite woman was something to prize and remember.

Young Windygates saw comparatively little of the true son of the house, and of the daughters, who were so fenced off from him that Braehead, his temporary governor, could regard their existence and near neighbourhood with absolute unconcern. Those last specimens of the Châlons family puzzled the young laird, and rather repelled than attracted him. They were very young certainly, and he was still enough of a boy to be shy with big children (even Geneviève Comtesse de Haute-Blois was barely fourteen, and Bertrande, the coming Abbess of Châlons, was little more than twelve), in their stiff brocades and piled-up curls. The girls' complexions were as sallow as their mother's, while their long noses were still too pronounced, and their arms were all elbows under their ruffles. The Countess and the Abbess were the oddest mixture of old women of the world and children that young Allan could have conceived possible. They were, if he had known it, in a state of semi-emancipation. They stood behind their mother and shared in her receptions, though they did not receive themselves; they saw company at home, though they did not go into it abroad. Geneviève, on account of her early marriage, Bertrande, by reason of her dedication to the Church, were already half free from the silken bonds, impassable as iron bars, which held the demoiselles of France in a state of utter helplessness, inexperience, and practical ignorance till they passed in a twinkling from demoiselles into dames—dames of the provinces, dames of the Parisian *salons*, powers in politics and letters. Why, Braehead was proud to visit one of those dames, who, though getting up in years and threatened with blindness, had all the philosophers—French and English—at her feet. It was the transition from such short-sighted doves into such wideawake eagles which was so inexplicable to the uninitiated bystander. It could not be from intimate association with their seniors, for the only two girls of whom Allan Windygates could form an opinion stood at such a distance from their mother as well as their father that it was remarkable even to him, accustomed to the strict Scotch training of his generation. He could quite understand that they must be in entire subjection to their mother—that was only proper and becoming; but, in addition to that, though mother and daughters addressed each other as *ma chère mère* and *mes chers enfants*, though she

saluted them on both cheeks every morning and evening (nobody had thought of exchanging kisses at Windygates since Lady Windygates was a bride and young Allan was a baby), he could see that mother and daughters were still to all intents strangers to each other. He, a man according to his own definition, and Lady Windygates, the greatest disciplinarian up and down the Water, were far more intimate than the mature woman who was at once the softest and the most spirited, the frankest and the sweetest, of her sex whom he had ever known, showed herself with her young daughters.

Little Madame, or the little Countess, as Madame de Haute-Blois was called, and Mademoiselle de Châlons, though they had considerably more liberty and many more privileges than ordinary girls of their rank, could not stir on foot beyond the gates of their father's hôtel; they could not go out save in the family coach with a train of *femmes de chambre* and lacqueys in attendance. The girls could do nothing for themselves, any more than when they began to walk and speak. Young Windygates did not believe they had ever read a book, except what their priests and preceptors had given them, or cherished an idea which had not first been put by somebody else into those curly dark heads of theirs. He caught the two once handling *poupées* or dolls in a way that strongly suggested the owners had not given over playing with the china babies, though the bigger babies were ashamed of their occupation and huddled away the toys on his unexpected appearance.

'Madame la Comtesse and Mademoiselle, I pray you, do not permit me to disturb you,' the intruder had struggled to say in his best French.

'But no, Monsieur,' the daughters of the house had answered, with their heads in the air as became their birth and breeding, and had gone on minding him nevertheless. The present Countess and the future Abbess quarrelled openly over *pralines* and *gâteaux*, much as the sisters might have done half a dozen years before. The girls could beck and bridle with the best, but they had not a rational word to say to young Windygates, or to any other friend of their mother's, and he was far from exacting in his demands. They had nothing to tell of the Court, to which the young ladies had been frequently. They had nothing to tell of the old convent in which they had been brought up. Yet, hear them discussing dress with a *modiste*, or a shopman come for orders, and even a tyro could recognise not only that the juvenile maidens had all their wits about them when these were

called into play; more than that, the wits were of the sharpest. Or put cards into the small, mittened hands, and their owners would play lotto and *écarté* as well as their father and mother played the games, with the skill of accomplished experts, in a style which left the bungling performances of Allan Windygates, who was only learning French games, far behind.

Young Windygates had no sisters, but in the healthy kindly freedom of intercourse between Scotch gentlefolks of his generation he knew a good many girls almost as well as if they had been his sisters. He recalled Maisie Hunter when she was no older than these French girls—how fearlessly she ran about the loanings and leas, and went in and out of the cottages where she was a cherished guest. She would race with him from the top of the hill on which Windygates stood to the bottom. She could go to the kirk, or the Manse of Deerholms, or over to Windygates, or across to some other country house, by herself on her white pony, with no other escort than her colley dog Heather, when her old auntie Peggy was laid up with her winter cough and rheumatics. The young heiress of the Haughs could be depended upon to behave with the greatest propriety, and everybody respected her as the child respected herself. He remembered what he had heard his mother say in praise of Maisie's early attainments in needle-work, house-keeping, the dairy, the poultry-yard. He knew by experience how soon she could keep her own with him in the books she read of her own free will—the English Classics (Shakespeare, Pope, Addison, Shenstone), the Scotch Classics (Barbour, Blind Harry, Allan Ramsay, Rutherford's Letters, the 'Cloud of Witnesses'), nay, even French Classics ('*Telemachus*' and '*Paul and Virginia*'), which, though they had been translated from the French, the author's young countrywoman had never read in the original, notwithstanding that their mother went into ecstasies over the Mauritius, the faithful negroes, the peerless boy and girl, with their sweet sad fate.

And how quick Maisie was in storing up and retailing all that she observed and experienced when she went to Edinburgh for dancing and carving, and finishing lessons generally! How she was apt to call him back and set him right in his assertions of what he had seen on his limited travels! It had been one of his inducements to go to France to get beyond her bounds and power of correction, and to be able just to crow a little over her in what would be his superior knowledge of the world. For young Allan was by no means blinded, either by conceit or partiality, in his

estimate of what had been the terms on which he had stood with Maisie Hunter in the past. In spite of what Lady Windygates had said, he had felt considerably piqued by the bright, alert piece of juvenile womankind who had often been held up to him, notwithstanding the difference of sex, as a mingled example and reproach. He had been inspired on occasions with a boyish heartiness of resentment against Maisie, till dawning manhood and womanhood softened and transformed both of them. He had been beginning to take a bracing, shamefaced satisfaction, made up of pleasure as well as of annoyance, in thwarting and being thwarted by Maisie Hunter, and in cherishing a resolve deep down in his heart to get the better of her at last. Now he thought she was worth a hundred of those demoiselles of France, and he could not restrain a secret laugh when he reflected how Maisie and other girls on his Deer Water—Katie Cranstoun and Bell Dalrymple—would stare, stiffen, and wax disdainful over these silly childish daughters of the great house of Châlons.

Yet let us say, though young Windygates little foresaw such an ending, when the day of doom came, these slight sprigs of quality were not found wanting any more than women like Maisie Hunter had failed in the turbulent annals of the Kirk and Covenant.

Noblesse oblige prevailed, where the frivolous material was concerned, in a manner so strangely heroic and pathetic that the rest of the world, looking on, held its breath in wonder, admiration, and pity. But there was no word of a national knife and the heaped-up guillotine baskets in the days when Allan Windygates was in Paris decorously and doucely sowing his wild oats, having his comb cut, picking up crumbs of wisdom and wit and French polish to give him the pre-eminence at kirk and market over his fellows up and down the Water, and over the saucy lass, Maisie Hunter. She was betimes assuming the overweening superiority and authority which, according to Braehead, every lady on the Water did not hesitate to claim and exercise over the laird—be he ever so certain a shot, successful a farmer, sagacious a planter, energetic a politician, and gallant a yeoman.

CHAPTER III.

OUR COUSIN JEANNETTE—THE WIDOW STE. BARBE.

BUT there was another inmate of the Hôtel de Châlons who was fated to have more to do with young Windygates in the sequel than the Duchess herself found; more to do than any woman in

France either attempted or accomplished—than any woman in Scotland, unless, perhaps, his mother and Maisie Hunter.

Yet he did not take much notice of this member of the family at first, or dream of associating her with himself, till the association was forced upon him.

She was our Cousin Jeannette, Madame Ste. Barbe, the young widowed kinswoman and hanger-on, a constant figure in the scene—at the same time a figure which was never either still or stationary. It did not occur for a long time to Allan that she was a person of marked individuality, that she was really the most companionable and, after the Duchess, the most amusing of the Châlons household. He never calculated that she was not more than two or three years older than himself, though she had been so long a widow. He hardly even saw in those days that she was very handsome. She was a tall, black-browed, black-eyed woman, with full red lips and a dash of natural carmine in her brown cheeks—the last peculiarity said to betray a Burgundian descent on one side of the house at least. The lines of her figure were rounded and supple. She had long before resigned every trace of her widowhood, though she dressed, when not in white, in black, like many of her countrywomen to this day.

Next to Madame the Duchess, Madame Ste. Barbe was beyond comparison the best talker in the Hôtel de Châlons, and if she had liked she could have picked up more English in a week than the others had acquired in years. She understood young Windygates's Anglo-French in the course of the first evening she spent in his company. She made him understand her, dense as he was in comparison, by a glance—a turn of the head. She had genuine conversational talent, with a character of its own—not so winning as that of the Duchess, but more daring. She never entered the lists, however, with her kinswoman for the acclamations of the *salon*. It was when the great Madame was absent, or chose to be silent, that Madame Ste. Barbe came to the front and consented to entertain the company. Then the boldness of her flights might have arrested Braehead himself, a possibility which did not prevent him from having a strong prejudice against her. If he had entertained no great appreciation for the good wives of the Deer Water—patterns of virtue and excellent management—but had, on the contrary, pitied the husbands in such estimable toils, he had a positive abhorrence of widows, especially high-spirited, enterprising widows, and a blind contempt for their victims. It was

the blindness or the disdain which caused Braehead to be so easily led by the Majordomo into ignoring any danger to young Allan's bachelor freedom at the Hôtel de Châlons from the presence of the widow Ste. Barbe. Most people would have regarded her as the most formidable antagonist whom the young man could encounter. But Braehead was a contradictory being from his mother's arms, and he persisted in slighting her for the very qualities of double-facedness and shiftiness, slanderous spite, and brazen dishonesty, which he liberally attributed to her, that would have aroused the liveliest apprehension in the friend of any other lad exposed to such wiles. But what had young Windygates to do with a steeple of a woman, a toad-eating jade, whose tongue at the same time could wag on her own account when opportunity offered—a lady who had been at her crafty tricks and evil practices when Lady Windygates's son was flying his kite and finding birds' nests—an impudent, irreverent gipsy, for all her fine manners? Who gave her, a woman—above all, a young woman—the right of thinking for herself? What could she know, and, if she knew, how could she weigh and balance evidence? Set her up! to even herself to wise men. Let women stick to their priests and kirks, to their men and bairns, their wheels and baking boards. Nobody asked them to do anything else or to put their fingers into the world's pie. Women brought disrepute on philosophy, turned it into ridicule, made it out to be a vehicle for wantonness and wickedness. Madame Ste. Barbe was a black-avised beauty, if you would have it that she was a beauty, and she was old enough to be Allan Wedderburn's great-grandmother.

In the beginning Allan agreed to some extent with Braehead. Madame Ste. Barbe's mature charms—for women grow up soon in France, the moment they are emancipated from a cloister, and poor Madame had not even possessed that safeguard in her youth—did not impress him. They would have impressed nine out of ten very young men when the charms were combined with the implied flattery of her marked deference to their opinions, her scrupulous attention to their wants and wishes, and her thinking it worth while to address to these youngsters her brilliantly erratic theories of religion, morals, and government, which might have been listened to with astonishment and respect by an Encyclopædist. But Allan was not among the nine young men. He did not altogether undervalue either her bodily or mental gifts. He considered her a handsome, 'strapping' woman, amazingly clever ;

only she was not in his line. Either his fascinated admiration of the Duchess served him in good stead, as an antidote to preserve him from a similar bondage to Madame Ste. Barbe—or young Windygates, unlike as he was to Braehead, and good-naturedly despised by him in consequence, had inherited a constitutional share of Robbie Wedderburn's mental twist. It was this twist, together with his immense, yet cool-headed, conceit and large reasoning powers, which made Braehead.

Young Allan's impenetrability to Madame Ste. Barbe's weapons was certainly not the result of the panoply provided by a special knowledge of evil on his part. He was utterly unsuspecting of any superior acquaintance on hers. He would no more have leapt to the conclusion that there were smirches and stains on her reputation because of her undefined position, and the well-understood, half-scornful exemption that was granted to her from the surveillance exercised over other young women, than he would have been brought to believe without great difficulty that it was convenient to the Châlons to ignore these flaws in Madame Ste. Barbe's escutcheon. He could not guess that the Duke and Duchess did not hesitate to avail themselves of all that was *vaurienne* in Cousin Jeannette's experience in order to learn what it concerned and interested them to hear of that French Bohemia with which, according to their blandly dignified profession, they had nothing whatever to do. He could not conceive that they would deliberately expose the young daughters of the house, who were apparently hedged round by every barrier which could protect *jeunes ingénues* from premature communication with a wicked world, to constant intercourse with a cousin tainted in her antecedents, and yet possessed of such influence over her kinswomen as her seniority in years and priority in intellect were calculated to lend her in spite of her state of dependence.

Young Windygates was incapable of compassing these things, and, though Braehead did not include the prohibition of an acquaintance with them in his pledge to the lad's mother, there was sufficient manliness in him to keep him from enlightening his twenty-one-years old charge on these and similar topics. Allan knew that Madame Ste. Barbe had been a penniless orphan, suffered to grow up anyhow among the *femmes de chambre* and lacqueys of her better endowed relations. He had heard that she had been disposed of by means of a marriage, when she was no older than the little Madame, to a man who was, like herself, the penniless offshoot of a noble family. To enable him to marry, he had held

a sinecure in connection with the Government office of *Fermier Général*. In this he had subsequently managed to fail, not to say signally, but disgracefully. Afterwards he had relieved his wife and connections of any obligation to bear with him further by blowing his brains out, and Madame had claimed the hospitality of the Hôtel de Châlons, which had been thenceforth granted to her.

For these particulars of Madame Ste. Barbe's history Allan simply pitied the handsome—or, as he called her, 'strapping'—clever young widow. He did not in the least comprehend what they had to do with such an incongruous, unaccountable incident as his occasionally coming across her alone and unattended, while she was muffled up, as if to avoid recognition, going quickly in a *fiacre*, or even on foot, along the streets which he was traversing, towards midnight, on his way from the Hôtel de Châlons to his inn.

There was an amount of independence in this proceeding beyond anything of the kind which young Windygates had ever advocated for any member of Madame Ste. Barbe's sex. Indeed, he was so astounded by the amazing contradiction which it presented to French customs as he had found them, and so alarmed at the risk the lady might run, that he would have followed her and begged her to accept his company, had he not been stopped by Braehead the first time the thing happened.

'Don't, man,' said the philosopher gruffly; 'you'll get no thanks for your interference. That lady can take care of herself.' He did not add that there were adventures for such as she—nay, for women of far higher standing and less damaged character than this poor woman could claim—opera suppers, Porcheron balls, card-tables where unlimited stakes were allowed—which the sinners of the Hôtel de Châlons winked at, though neither the adventures nor the fields for them were fit to be repeated in the ears of a raw Scotch lad uninitiated even in the milder forms of depravity, and entrusted to Braehead's care.

So Braehead did not explain what was glaringly inconsistent, nor did he repeat to young Allan another tale told by the communicative Majordomo. It was to this effect:—A few years before, just when Madame Ste. Barbe had come, a young widow, to the Hôtel de Châlons, she had the inconceivable ingratitude and impertinence to make eyes at the Marquis de Beauval, who was then more at home than he had since been, while he had not yet cut his wisdom-teeth. Luckily, the affair, on the first blush of it,

had been detected by Madame the Duchess, who had, of course, reported the circumstance to Monsieur the Duke, and he had put down his foot on it with such force that it was stamped out of existence on the instant. Serve the spying, scheming, little-worth widow, with her *beaux yeux*, right! She had always been rather a favourite with Monsieur—that is, she entertained him with her sharp tongue, and he had supplied her with more indulgences than the ladies of the family had it in their power to bestow, while he did not exact from her in return the concessions which they would have demanded. But on this occasion he required her presence at the interview which he had with the Marquis. Then the Duke politely reminded her to her face, in his son's hearing, of sundry items in her origin, and of certain lapses in integrity of which she had already been guilty—and *crac!* there was an end to that scandal. Oh yes, Monsieur the Duke and Madame the Duchess and Madame Ste. Barbe were all as good friends as ever. Bah! she could not afford to quarrel with them if they were generous enough to look over her heinous offence. Monsieur the Marquis came little to his father's house from that date, and was as cold as ice to *Madame ma belle cousine* when he did come; and she was more than ever a termagant and a *diablesse* among the servants and retainers.

Young Windygates took it into his honest head, as a solution to the riddle which had been presented to him, that Madame Ste. Barbe had doubtless poor relations as well as rich ones, and that she visited and relieved the former at odd hours. This conclusion made him rather sorry for the curbed and fettered dashing beauty and *bel esprit*.

Therefore, whereas there had crept into the scrupulous politeness with which the Duke and the other gentlemen frequenting the Hôtel de Châlons treated her a dash of sarcasm and mockery, there stole into Allan Windygates's behaviour a very different quality—a tone of kindly sympathy and manly good-feeling.

Madame Ste. Barbe was quick to mark and appropriate the unwonted tribute. This home-bred, inevitably rustic, Scotch laird either believed in her still, or made allowance for her as none of the other men did. The conviction moved the retainer much as Allan's enthusiastic admiration had touched her superior.

Ma cousine Jeannette's great glittering black eyes found a mist come across them, and the eyelids drooped a little; her tongue, shrill in the diamond-cut-diamond of her *persiflage*, flagged for

an instant when she weighed the difference between Monsieur Allan Wedderburn's manner towards her and the manner of some other gentlemen who ought to have been the last to condemn her. There was danger of her making too much of the difference, for she was young yet, and, ardent as she was undisciplined, prone to act on impulse and to repent at leisure. She might be so far left to herself as to seek to throw her spells over him, and to snatch at a chance of release by his means from her horribly ambiguous, often torturing, position. And it was a fact that Jeannette Ste. Barbe had never, to this hour, woven her spells and plied her allurements without these being in some fashion disastrous alike to the victim and to the enchantress who sought to make him her prey.

The great chance for poor young Windygates, entangled in the meshes of his own single-heartedness, was, if his mother could have comprehended it, not his virtuous upbringing, or any passages of the nature of 'Scotch folks' wooing,' that might have passed for calf-love between him and Maisie Hunter of the Haughs. It was the circumstance that, after all, he and his, as Madame Ste. Barbe could make them out, did not offer very great inducements to a Frenchwoman of gentle birth, though clouded descent, with the run of her cousin the Duke's house—though it was only as a poor relation and tolerated hanger-on—to cast in her lot with a foreigner. She could not give up all she prized most for his sake, or, for such advantages as he could bring, turn her back on Paris, which was the centre of the universe for luxury, culture, free thought, and the sparkling gaieties, which she had by no means outgrown, in order to sink into a provincial dame.

The province was not even in France, but in the bleak gloom of bearish, poverty-stricken, bigoted, yet heretical Scotland, an ally of France in the past, she had been told, but always a rude and turbulent ally.

Neither was the splendid life of the Hôtel de Châlons, in spite of its humiliations and torments, without compensations. There was a magnanimity about Madame the Duchess in the middle of her fits of tyranny and the outrageous extremes of which she could be guilty, else Madame Ste. Barbe had not continued a member of the household after a certain piece of unheard-of presumption. The Duke had constituted himself her lazy, *nonchalant* patron, and was in the mind to permit no one else to punish her as he had not scrupled to do. The little Countess and the Demoiselle were insolent children at times, but at other times the sisters hung on

la cousine Jeannette for amusement, and for such support as she could afford them in any of the small independent acts of their small lives. No servant—not the Duchess's arrogant *femme de chambre*, or the Duke's Machiavellian valet, or the brisk, senseless Majordomo, who had babbled of the affairs of the family to the pompous, heavy old Scotch *savant*—dared contradict Madame Ste. Barbe to her face.

While she continued in Paris she had various sources of private income. She had the amount settled on her by her cousin the Duke, together with the capricious gifts of Madame the Duchess and her daughters; she had her winnings from the gaming-tables at which she assisted, where she recommended herself to the owners quite as much by her intimate knowledge of what went on in half the *hôtels* of the quality in the aristocratic faubourg, and her skill in discussing the politics and news of the day, as by her adroitness in playing cards. She was one of the most accomplished weavers of lace in the country, and she was a thousand times more industrious with her pillow and bobbins, which her supple white fingers flung about like the swift play of sunlight, in wonderful rhythmical mazes, than even the Duchess was with her *mouton*. Though Madame Ste. Barbe did not acknowledge it, there was little question that she disposed in one fashion or another of some of her treasures of lace—the varieties of Point d'Alençon and Valenciennes. She had made herself mistress of the tricks of the craft, and copied from old patterns with as fine a sleight of hand as ever was acquired by the regular lace-weavers, with the secrets of lace-weaving handed down from mother to daughter as a family possession, or by the painstaking nuns in the tranquil leisure of their convents. The widow did not grow sick of her lucrative art in its delicate fruits. She was known from her habit of atoning for any deficiencies in the expensive toilets of the time by having her gowns and mantles, hoods and fichus, sleeves and gloves, profusely trimmed with her exquisite handiwork. There was a saying among her acquaintances that Madame Ste. Barbe, under whatever disguise, in the mask which was much affected in the dubious festivities of the period, could be still more speedily and surely detected by the lavishness and superbness of her costly cobweb lace than by her tall figure, the half haughty, half crafty, bend of her neck, and the flash of her magnificent eyes under their long lashes.

(To be continued.)

A COACH DRIVE AT THE LAKES.

PART I.

FROM WINDERMERE TO RYDAL WATER.

THE Rebellion of 1745 was a boon to those who horsed the mails in the north, for it called attention to the need of good roads, and many are the blessings that were poured upon the heads of the 'bare leggit' laddies from across the border by old Tom Preston and David Johnson, the long-remembered whips who drove their chocolate-bodied coaches betwixt Whitehaven and Lancaster, a distance of eighty-one miles, in twelve hours and a quarter.

In those days people bound for the south from the coast either went to Carlisle, paid their six guineas for an inside place, and, leaving the town of the Red King at 6 P.M., arrived in London at twilight of the second morning; or they took the coach by Workington, Cockermouth, Keswick, Ambleside, and Kendal to Lancaster, and a very popular stage it was too. They did not enter into the deeper meaning of scenery as we do, but all the way up to London they had memories of Skiddaw and Helvellyn to solemnise, and visions of Bassenthwaite, Derwentwater, Thirlmere, Grasmere, Rydal, and Windermere to make a sad man smile. There was at the beginning of the century, too, a chance of a 'crack' with some of the literary heroes and local characters of the day. Southey would certainly come down in his clogs and with his 'nebbed' cap to fetch or dispatch a parcel of rare books when the coach pulled up in the Keswick market place. Parson Bird would probably handle the ribands over the Raise and be chaffed unmercifully because of his thus driving the 'Cuckoo,' for so the coach was called.

De Quincey would get up at the Nab on his way to see Wilson of Elleray. Hartley Coleridge would be offered a ride for his talk's sake, young Faber or gentle Charles Lloyd might have taken places for London, and it was almost certain that 'Mr. Wordsworth, him o' Rydal,' would meet the coach at Ambleside for proofs or letters.

Yes, it was a memorable stage, that stage from Whitehaven to Kendal and Lancaster in the olden time—memorable for

scenery and society alike. Then came the iron horse, and, though poets and coach-drivers were one in their opposition, it snorted up the long incline from Kendal to Birthwaite, and the mail from Windermere to Lancaster ceased.

But still the merry tootling of the horn is heard for part of the year over the twenty-one miles that stretch between Windermere and Keswick. So well does 'the beautiful Romance of Nature' which Wordsworth apostrophised in his sonnet, on hearing of the approach of the Kendal and Windermere railway, plead for 'the peace' of the district, that an attempt to substitute the swift wings of the steam god for the humbler pace of a four-in-hand coach over a portion of the stage before us was last year frustrated in Parliament.

Still one nook of English ground, a little nook twenty miles across, is secured from the rash invader that Trevethick planned, and anyone who loves for old Dake's sake a bit of coaching, can find a choice of sixteen well appointed four-in-hands ready to scamper off north, east, or west, to any part of the Lake District from Windermere, on any day of the week during the tourist season.

The coach drive of the future will take us up Langdale over the Stake down Langstrath and Borrowdale to Keswick, and bring us back by Thirlmere and the Raise to Windermere, but the Stake pass road 'will bide a deal o' makking,' as the Northmen say, and so we must just be content with a coach drive 'there and back,' over the same line from Windermere to Keswick, and we may be well content.

There is not anywhere in England a drive so full of that mingled natural and human interest which makes scenery so impressive. It is well-nigh impossible for sensitive minds not to feel something of 'the light that never was on sea or land' as they pass the thresholds of the good and great, whose thoughts have helped our England to be pure. In this coach drive to Keswick they not only go by the homes of the thinkers and poets and philosophers, but their foreheads feel the wind and rain that gave such freshness to the seers of the last generation; the sunlight on lake or mountain head that filled their minds with glory fills ours to-day. The woods and waterfalls that speak to us upon our way spoke also to them. We can in fancy see their familiar forms upon the road, and, as in eastern travels the 'weli' or wayside tomb made the journey's stage rememberable, so we find in

this pilgrim stage through poet-land that the great dead lend it a kind of solemn sweetness, and the dust of two Laureates hallows the wonder-giving way.

Taken all in all, there is no twenty-one miles' coach drive that so stirs the imagination as this coach drive from Windermere to Keswick, and yet, as one listens to the chatter on the box or the chaff on the seat behind the driver, one feels that few journeys are so little known about as having worthy associations.

It is a fact that the only object of interest on the whole way for a whole coach-load has often proved to be the shape of a rock on Helen Crag and the traditional cairn of the legendary 'last king of rocky Cumberland' on Dunmail Raise. I had taken the coach drive in mid-May, when all the land seemed lit with living gold, so golden were the oaks, so golden-green the beech-leaves fluttering into beauty, so yellow were the fields with buttercups. Then the woods we passed through were starred with anemones, and just beyond Ambleside, by the Scandale beck, the copse and meadow-land was purple with the blue-bell. Now it was mid-June, the hawthorns hardly past their prime, the fields full of ox-eye daisies and lilac crane's-bill, the gardens gorgeous with rhododendrons.

The coach would not start from Rigg's for an hour, so I climbed up Orrest Head and realised there how poets were made, and how poet-hearts are given to the yeomen sons who from their white-shining farms 'and ample stores beneath their burnished sycamores' pass forth to labour until the evening from such secluded, happy, upland homes as Orrest Head gave sight of. The strange sleep that lay upon the conical ridge of High Street to the north—High Street that the Roman conqueror knew; the marvellous beauty of the hill-clusters to the west; the varied distances of their groupings as they rose from Ironkeld to Bowfell, and beyond the Langdale Pikes to Scafell Pike; the dropping of the larch-covered Furness Fells towards the lake; the beauty of the smooth emerald knolls and interspaces of grass that broke up the woody places and thickets full of song at my feet; the way in which the whole land seemed to be cheered by the dwellings of men yet quite unmarred by their presence—made the view from Orrest Head over Applethwaite remarkable. And then the lake of Winander, how like unto a glorious river, rolled among its islands to the sea, it gleamed; and how the distant sands of Morcambe shimmered seaward, how white the Farleton Knot glittered, how

grey Sedbergh Fells and Ingleborough's table mountain gloomed to the east and south!

As I stood on Orrest Head 'I made no vows, but vows were made for me.' I realised how such 'bright scenes' 'given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance' were likely to raise more surely, year by year, antagonism to any Vandal schemes of desecration, and, walking downwards 'in thankful blessedness that yet survives,' found myself beneath the sycamore that shadows the cottage home of Christopher North's happy married days.

A great branch has gone from the tree, but one can agree with Professor Wilson's soliloquy as one gazes up into its beemurmuring massy dome of foliage—'Never in this well-wooded world,' said he, 'not even in the days of the Druids, could there have been such another tree! It would be easier to suppose two Shakespeares.' The trees hard by have somewhat obscured the view, but De Quincey is right when describing it as such a view as you might expect 'on Athos seen from Samothrace.' He wrote: 'I cannot recollect any spectacle in England or Wales which so much dilates the heart with a sense of power and aerial sublimity as this terrace view from Elleray.'

The cottage is beautiful still, though it is not so embowered with roses as on that 'tranquil day of nature and delight,' the 11th day of May, 1811, when hither Christopher Wilson led his bright and beauteous bride, Miss Jane Penny, to begin a halcyon honeymoon. And yet the cottage is not much changed; one can see the Professor, clad in sailor suit, leaning his Ciceronian chin on his hand at yonder window to look which way the wind lies on Windermere, for it is Regatta day, and faithful Billy Balmer has come up to ask whether his master will sail the 'Endeavour' or the 'Jane' or the 'Palafox.' And we can hear his hearty laugh as he slaps Bishop Watson of Calgarth on the back, and tells him how the other day he threw the lithest dalesman at Wastdale Head, and flung himself out of a boat in mid-lake, pretending he was taken with a bad fit and that he could not swim, or how De Quincey and he were near being taken up for sheep-stealers a few nights past upon the Fells. That large room at the southern end of the cottage is much as it was when Wilson built it for a drawing-room. Now on a Sunday it is filled with Bible-class scholars. Once on a time, before the flooring was down, it was covered with turf and crammed with the Professor's friends from all the neighbouring farms 'to see as gay good a main o' cocks

fowl as ever was seen i' Westmorland.' History does not tell us whether it was Lord Derby, the Keswick grey, Caradice, or the Black Brass winged cock, that beat the bird that belonged to the Bishop's son on that occasion, but it was a famous victory, and when the victor's silver drinking-cup went round at 'the genteel supper' after the main, much luck was wished to the man who could sail a boat, or jump a long jump, or wrestle, or fight a cock, or write a stanza in his Isle of Palms descriptive of Elleray, against any man in the country.

We leave Elleray and descend to the station through a perfect glory of rhododendron flower either side our way—'Jump up, sir, coach can't wait!' and away we rattle. Past the church with its painted clock-dial to tell the present as it goes, and its ice-planed-and-scratched boulders in the graveyard to mark the time that is past and gone. We are soon at the Cook's House Crossway. The road to the left is the old road to Bowness, that to the right will take us to Troutbeck—Troutbeck of Hogarthian memories, for it is said that both the father and the song-making satirical uncle of the painter lived at 'the Crag' in the vale. There are Hogarths still at Keswick, as all lovers of good pencils know.

Troutbeck is famous too for its giant of olden time, who so pleased King Henry IV. by the feats of strength he performed that the King granted him house and rights of wood and turbary at Troutbeck Tongue. We have our giants still in Troutbeck; the grandson of Auld Peggy Longmire, who lived there till she was 104 years old, was champion wrestler in his day, and is hale and hearty still. We might have giants in the valley for far generations if, instead of drinking 'washy' tea, the country folk would remember the recipe for strength that old giant gave to Henry IV., who, in answer to the King's question as to his fare, replied, 'Thick pottage and milk that a mouse might walk upon dryshod, for breakfast, and the sunny side of a wether to his dinner when he could get it.'

Now by graceful beech-trees, till, in a moment, as fine a panoramic scene as we shall see all the way to Keswick opens out above the hollow lawns of old Calgarth. Resting like couchant lions above the woods lie the Langdale Pikes, serenely blue, while, white as frosted silver, the lake shines above and on either side the ancient roof-tree of the Philipsons—the haunted hall of unhappy fame,

Dorothy and Kraster Cook, so runs the story, owned 'Kale-gards,' or, as some old chroniclers spell it, 'Calf-garth,' and one Myles Philipson, a wealthy neighbour, coveted this Naboth's plot, bade the couple to supper, sent them away with a pie in which previously had been concealed a bit of valuable silver plate, then accused them of stealing, brought them to trial, and obtained judgment against them. Dorothy rose in the court-room and cursed her murderer thus: 'Guard thyself, Myles Philipson, thou mayest think thou hast managed grandly, but that tiny plot of garden ground will be the dearest ever bought. Time shall be that no Philipson shall own an acre, and, while the Calgarth walls shall stand, we will haunt it night and day.'

The skulls of Dorothy and Kraster, so the local legend is, do what men will, return, and are found in the wall niches or behind the wainscot, and all that is left of the Philipsons in the hall is the beautiful coat-of-arms, in floriated intricacies curiously wrought, that adorns the kitchen of to-day.

We are spinning on now downhill to the Troutbeck bridge. That sycamore on the right is worth looking at. Son of Anak, among trees. The hammers are clinking at the forge, and the man who comes out to gaze as we rattle by is one of the shrewdest votaries of Vulcan hereabout. You do not often find a village smith a connoisseur of water-colours, but, as I hear, his father's hobby is to collect these, and his house is full of good examples.

On by Calgarth Park, where lived the Bishop whose face once hung for a sign, so the saying is, at a public-house in a dale not far from here, with these words inscribed above it, 'This is the Real Old Cock.' There had been much rivalry among innkeepers, and the original 'Old Cock' house-of-call refused to have its nose put out of joint by any newer bird of its breed and sign episcopal.

We note the simple beauty of a Westmoreland farm-house, its milk-white porch, its welcome retirement in the fields just off the road to the right, wish we were lodgers there, then plunge into the Ecclerigg woods—the air full breathed of the sweet rowan flowers. How gay the rhododendrons shine, and if it were but rose time we should marvel at the show of roses in this close-kept sanctuary of rest on our right.

Now Lowwood is seen—the tall dark pines by the lake shore, the white water gleaming across to Wray, with its castled height not old in story, for the castle was only built this century, and that too out of a bit of spleen with the wild north-wester which

had unroofed Dr. Dawson's little cottage close by. But, if the castle is but young, so well is it built of native stone that it seemeth truly no new or inharmonious thing, and high above it towers the larch-covered barrow where Lather the Norse chieftain had his village and found his burial.

One cannot gaze from Lowwood across to Wray without going over the hill beyond, in fancy, to that little Norwegian-looking town of Hawkshead, lying in its happy hollow by Esthwaite Lake, and thinking of the schoolboy who there

From Nature and her overflowing soul
 . . . received so much that all *his* thoughts
 Were steeped in feeling ;

and here at our feet, as we sight Lowwood, is running across the road a little unpretending rill, whereby that schoolboy, grown to be a man, once rested with his sister Dorothy as they were trudging from Kendal to pay their first visit together to the land they have jointly immortalised. I say jointly, for Dorothy was an inspiration to him. In his sonnet—written years after the event—descriptive of this Skel-ghyll Beck (it may be found sixth of the first series of Miscellaneous Sonnets) Wordsworth tells us

The immortal spirit of one happy day
 Lingers beside that rill in vision clear.

As long as travellers who honour purity and simplicity of verse pass this way they will surely in fancy see the forms of the young poet and his sister Dorothy resting to refresh themselves by the side of the lake, just there where the Skelgill streamlet enters it.

Lowwood is reached—Lowwood, that haunt of happy lovers ; Lowwood, whose hostel-keeper Thomas Jackson had so befriended the poet Hartley Coleridge that, on hearing of his death by an accidental fall from a tree, Coleridge was moved to write a memorial poem. Lowwood surroundings are little changed—

The lake is there, the hills their distance keep,
 The tall trees stand as if they mourned for ever ;

but, dark though the Scotch firs are, the waters of Windermere, just now leaden-hued with a drift of rain, ripple into sudden sunshine. Yes, Hartley Coleridge, you are right—

Sage Nature is not bound to sympathise
 With every passion of a single soul.

There is as much sun as shadow of memory on Lowwood's hostel roof.

We leave a pair of very happy people behind us at the welcoming door. We have had a good gaze towards the Langdales; we are off, with a cheery cry to the smoking team, and a crack of the whip that echoes to the hill. Above us, up in the tangled copse, now wreathed with wild roses, sweet with the scent of the birches and fragrant with the elder-flower, there is floating the bluish vapour from a single cottage chimney. That smoke curl betrays the one time home of her whose fortune belied her name. Here, in 1830, Felicia Hemans lived and sang. I have sometimes thought that she was picturing Dove's Nest when in her poem to Wordsworth she describes the spirit of Wordsworth's poetry in its calm

As fitly to be taken
To the still breast in sunny garden bowers,
Where vernal winds each tree's low tones awaken,
And bud and bell with changes mark the hours.

Certain it is that from her woodland retreat she watched many a time, as she describes it in the same verse,

The day
Sink with a golden and calm decay

over the Langdales to the west.

I looked across the shining water to beautiful Loughrigg, and my eye was carried away towards Piko Blisco, Crinkle Crag, the solemn Bowfell, and the Langdale Pikes, but it was on old Brathay Vicarage, this side of the Italian-looking church tower of Brathay, and on Croft Lodge among its rhododendrons beneath the hill, that my gaze rested. At that latter house how many a time in the days of Mr. Branker's hospitality had Wordsworth rested when he took his favourite walk from Rydal right round Loughrigg Fell! there how many a dinner party had Hartley Coleridge brightened with his sallies of wit! Poor Hartley, it was on his way home from that house on a dark night that he missed his footing by the Rotha's stream, and took such cold from his wetting that he never recovered.

But the white house beneath the pines—old Brathay Vicarage—that too has its memories. There dwelt that wise and pretty little Quakeress, whose son was the late learned saintly Bishop of Lincoln; there too, in days of flute and dance, came Wilson and De Quincey. And by the Bratha river, as it flows hard by over its rocky bed, many a time after dusk, as was De Quincey's wont, he and his friend Charles Lloyd used to listen to the water's chine

and 'with profound emotion and awe hearken to the sound of pealing anthems as if streaming from the open portals of some illimitable cathedral.' Gaze up the valley toward the Langdales, and think how many a time passed up the valley to his pastoral work, from that old Brathay vicarage, the young clergyman Owen Lloyd, whose heart was with the dalesmen and the hills, of whom his school companion wrote—

He rests in peace : in Langdale's peaceful vale
He sleeps secure beneath the grassy sod.
Ah no, he doth not—he hath heard, 'All hail,
Thou faithful servant,' from the throne of God ;

and whose epitaph in the little Langdale churchyard will be read as long as Wordsworth is held in honour. Now, ere the coach hurries on, look at yonder meadow between the boat-landing and the river's mouth : in that meadow was dug up years ago a Roman tripod kettle. Altars and handmills of grit-stone have been unearthed there ; glass vials and coins, now in the Ashmolean at Oxford, tell us that there the Roman soldiers had their camp. And doubtless from Loughrigg Fell the sentinels watched the convoys bring from east and west the metal for the smelting in the Ambleside vale.

The 'three-foot Brandreth field' is desolate, and all we see to-day is the rampart they raised about what Camden calls 'the dead carcase of an ancient city.' From it those Romans made a paved way, over part of which our coach will trundle as we pass by Rydal Park. Still, to-day, when the wrestlers meet for their annual contest at Grasmere, they hold their sport in the meadow called the 'Pavement End.'

What those legionaries called their camp, unless it be Dictis, as in the 'Notitia,' none know, for after the Roman came the Dane. He pastured his flocks on 'Wangs' or Wans Fell, that rises to the right. And yonder circling majesty of hill in front took from him and his shepherd life its name 'Fåårfeld,' or Fair-field of our time ; and he it was who sat himself down by the shining Rotha and the thundering Stock-Ghyll Force and gave his own name to his seat or sitting, Amil's or Hamil's Seat—Ambleside of to-day.

We drive on and pull up short at the Salutation Hill.

Times have changed since the tall cluster of Scotch firs stood in the market place, and men looked down from the balcony beneath the broad eaves of the weavers' shed upon the new-fangled coach

express. But there are old people in the throng of on-lookers who remember a tall, gaunt-faced, serious-looking man in a 'bit of an old boxer, or a cap with a neb to it, and an all-round cloak,' who would, regular as clock-work, walk out in all weathers to meet the coach, and give and take his despatches to the driver, and hear the latest political news, and so back to Rydal.

'Time's up, gentlemen,' and away over the Stock with its picturesque old mill-wheel, past a cluster of houses grouped for an artist, with a sycamore springing like a fountain of green, and cool, 'above the milk-white walls and sunny eaves,' we speed, and we can echo the words of a local sonnet-writer as we turn to gaze back upon the tree and the village—

Long may the woodman's axe to wanderers spare
Thy monumental presence, high in air !

That house in its sloping garden grounds to the right is still tenanted by a lady who remembers how half afraid of Hartley Coleridge the little girls with whom he played, when he was at school at Ambleside, were. Scale How to-day, it was called Green Bank in the time half-a-century ago when it received as tutor to the boys of the family a man of whom Wordsworth used to say, 'He is the only one I know who sees more things in Nature than I do in a country walk.'

There Father Faber, then fresh from Oxford, lived and wrote. One cannot, as one gazes across the field to the left and sees the shoulder of Loughrigg Fell glimmer into green and gold between the houses, forget that by the Brathay stream in those meadows Faber poured out his soul in verse, and on that bossy upland height of broken ground thought out the broken snatches of his song and refreshed his soul. Let the readers of his poem on 'Loughrigg' and his 'Brathay Sonnets' be our witness.

The house to our left, behind the chapel, is the Knoll. There Miss Harriet Martineau dwelt, and still in the north terrace garden stands the dial, with her prayer inscribed thereon, 'Come light, visit me.' A little further, and the one time home of a learned man of the old school, old Doctor Davy, is passed—Lesketh How. There in the old days was often seen the manly figure of Sir John Richardson, of Arctic fame, for Doctor Davy, Sir Humphry's brother, married the sister of beautiful Lady Richardson, one of the Fletchers of the country, whose name is gracious still. We look now keenly to the left, for away under Loughrigg may be

seen Dr. Arnold's holiday haunt, Fox How, and again, as we sweep on past Fidler's Farm, we gaze thither again.

The glades of Arnold's mimic Cithæron, above Fox How, have other shades upon them than the shadow of passing clouds. Matthew the poet is dead; and one of the strongest and stoutest-hearted statesmen of his time will never again be seen climbing the woodland path above Fox Ghyll. Yet, as we roll by, we can think of the power of yonder hillside to help the 'Fausta' of Mat Arnold's verse to be his nation's help in time of need.

It is not easy to make it out, but the lady whom Wordsworth addressed in his sonnet as

Rotha, my spiritual child,

lives in one of the grey cottage houses beyond Fox Ghyll, and the daughter-in-law of the poet Wordsworth is resident in a similar house further on, which we can catch a glimpse of as we near Pelter Bridge.

But we are passing Fidler's Farm, to lovers of Wordsworth interesting chiefly, because the poet, who was 'a deal thowt of in the daales' as an architect, used at the time of the building of the farm to come down most days to be consulted as to the work. He said it should be called Model Farm; we are sorry its name was altered. The chimneys of Fidler's Farm, like the chimneys of Fox How, appear to be 'creations,' or at any rate 'preservations,' of the poet.

Wordsworth, it is reported, liked to see chimneys built 'square hauf-way and round the tother,' and it seems he had a word in the building of many of the chimneys Rydal way.

We shall, as we drive on, note that the oldest farm-houses of Westmoreland were so built as to their chimney stacks, and we shall have to thank the poet for his picturesque conservatism.

That great clump of fir trees on a knoll to our left after we have passed Fidler's Farm is an historic site. For though, as described in the twenty-seventh of the Duddon Sonnets,

Fallen and diffused into a shapeless heap,
Or quietly self-buried in earth's mould,
Is that embattled house whose massy keep
Flung from yon cliff a shadow large and cold,

there seems to be little doubt that centuries ago the forerunner of the hall Sir Michael Le Fleming built up in the park was situated somewhere on this craggy knoll. And the traditions of

the Le Fleming family tell us that the castle occupants were driven to desert 'that embattled house' by reason of the fact that

Nightly lamentations, like the sweep
Of winds, though winds were silent, struck a deep
And lasting terror through that ancient hold.

Now a kingly-looking old oak tree, half built into the wall, is seen; that is 'the Lord's Yak' in the vernacular, and probably has seen gathered about it in olden time the tenants of the Lord of the Manor come to swear fealty, to pay their dues, or to have justice done them.

What a site for a house is yonder! How the stateliness of the hills and the majesty of the woods enshrines the Rydal Hall! In silver tones, after flood, comes borne down the ox-eye daisy strewn field a sound of falling waters such as makes one feel the presence of an enchanter's wand, and possibilities of the merry greenwood faerie.

And we are back in old days truly here, for yonder crag on the left of Loughrigg goes by the name of the 'Gate' Crag. In early British times the wild goat sprang from ledge to ledge, while the deer swept up the lawn, and, dark against the sky, stood magnified. Blow your horn, coachman, blow your horn, and wake all echoes that will not break our dream.

'Pelter Bridge, sir,' said the coachman, 'it was a most partic'ler favourite walk over that bridge, and round by Red Bank, for Mr. Wordsworth and his sister, Miss Dorothy, so the saying is. And that is Backhouse's spot. You have heard tell of Backhouse. He was Mr. Wordsworth's man i' the house, you know, sir. He was living to within a year since, and I used to see him creepin' along with his stick to bridge end and back. Ah, many a crack he and me have had together about Mr. Wordsworth. He used to break plates, you know, at his master's study door, to bring him to his dinner, so the sayin' is, for Mr. Wordsworth was that deaf in study. Ay, and he had his master's old stable lantern which he and Miss Dorothy used to walk the roads with after dark; he was as proud of that lantern as if it was his only child, was old Backhouse, sir, and no wonder either, for Mr. Wordsworth, so the sayin' is, did a deal of his po'try after dark.'

'You see those spruces, sir,' continued the coachman, who, from pre-Amblesidian silence, had warmed up to Rydalian volubility, 'they was the first spruces planted in this part, so they tell, and they've done their best, sir, them; none this-a-way better.'

Saying this, the coachman threw a daily paper over a garden palisade, to be picked up by the Rydal vicar, chirruped to his horses, and on we sped beneath the shadow of as fair a line of beeches as I had seen in Westmoreland. Rydal Church obscured the Haunt of the Muses, which I had hoped to see, but on passing the house where, in Wordsworth's time and after, dwelt a certain Mr. Ball, a Quaker of capacity for admiring the poets of the Lake district, and for cultivating roses, my eyes caught sight of 'Dora's Field,' there where rests the rough boulder stone which, saved from the builder's hand, his drill and charge of gunpowder, 'for some rude beauty of its own,' was rescued by the bard; there where in 1838 the old poet watched the gardeners shape a garden path and steps out of the rock, and wrote, as a kind of memorial inscription, this solemn advice:—

Would'st thou be gathered to Christ's chosen flock,
Shun the broad way too easily explored,
And let thy paths be hewn out of the rock—
The living rock of God's eternal Word.

Away, up above Dora's Field, through the oaks—alas! too well foliaged to admit fair view—I knew there was somewhere hid that moss-lined shed—green, soft, and dry—in which so often the poet and his sister paused and, resting, gazed either on that

Aërial rock whose solitary brow
From this low threshold daily meets the sight—

the beautiful Gate Crag—or, westward, watched Crinkle Crag, beyond Silver How, 'slope ladderlike to Heaven'—'those bright steps that heavenward raise their practicable way,' for so in his evening voluntary he describes them.

But I also remembered that close beside it was that 'Bandusian fount of clearness crystalline' to which 'the water-drinking bard' so oft repaired for a draught of Nature's giving—the well-known Nab Well. Close beside us on the road was a rude rocky throne, to which several rough-hewn steps led. It was 'Muster Wordsworth's favourite seat,' said the coachdriver; 'made a deal of his po'try there, I dar'say, sir;' and he relapsed into silence.

He may, thought I, have 'mused o'er flood or fell from this rocky roadside knell,' but, if what I know of his habits is at all correct, this man, 'retired as noontide dew,' would not have risked the intrusion of public wayfarers. No; rather he would have strolled with his sister on yonder path across the mere and beside the lake, and there have listened, as he tells us he did

listen, to the blythe newcomer, the cuckoo, not knowing whether to call 'her bird or but a wandering voice;' or he would have 'wandered lonely as a cloud' on yonder mountain path beneath Nab Scar—that 'little hoary line and faintly traced'—and have realised that a man's thoughts 'admit no bondage if his words have wings,' and that to the unsubstantial brotherhood of clouds the visionary splendours of a poet's mind may owe deep debts of inspiration.

My companions on the coach were not Wordsworthians, but, as we neared the great ash and sycamores that overshadow the road in front of the Nab Cottage, the sun broke out upon the hills to the north; the fresh fern that seemed to powder Silver How with dust of emerald, the wild roses dancing in the hedge, the foxglove spires and yellow poppies beneath the walls, the far flashes of light among the crags above our heads, the beauty of the Rydal Water beside our way, conspired to make them feel

the place so beautiful
That if a man should plant his cottage near,
Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
And blend its waters with his daily meal,
He would so love it that in his death hour
Its image would survive among his thoughts;

and they expressed themselves with much enthusiasm; and I could question with Wordsworth whether there really 'lives a man whose sole delights are pomp and city noise.'

The coachdriver caught up the infection of the scene and sunlight, and saying, 'Nab Cottage, where Hartley Coleridge lived and died,' he cracked his whip and whistled to his horses, well content.

Nab Cottage, or, as it is better known, the Nab, who can ever pass its homely little roof-tree without trying to spell out the meaning of the quaint letters on the black, lozenge-shaped stone above its door? Those initials, I. A. 3. P., are meaningless, but the date 1702 beneath tells us that the yeomen of nigh two centuries ago built themselves houses into the which they built their hearts' blood, even as they built in the solid walls the initials of their names.

The great ash-tree, the twin sycamores, red with a thousand seedlings to-day, tell us little of the Nab proprietors of old, though the yew-tree at their side proclaims that they came of a stock of men who handled the bow in the rude border days, and

grew, by edict of Henry VIII., the tree that should supply their battle-arms.

But there is about the Nab a graciousness of creeping foliage and flowers, a gentleness of order in its tiny garden plot, a fragrance of refined care from the great laurustinus that shades the tiny dormer window, that one feels that Nathaniel Hawthorne was right when he described it as 'a small, buff-tinted, plastered stone cottage, I should think of a very humble class originally, but it now looks as if persons of taste might sometime or other have sat down in it and caused flowers to spring up about it.'

Those who care to inquire will find that there dwelt here, in the beginning of this century, a yeoman, Simpson by name, a silent man, who joined to his farm avocations study of Milton and Shakespeare, and read with pleasure such classics for English readers as then existed. Man of taste as he was, his beautiful daughter Margaret was not less refined—'a woman of a steady mind, tender and deep in her excess of love, it was given to her to win the heart of a dark-eyed man of letters who dwelt at Townend, Grasmere, and patience was granted her to help up great depths of pitiable suffering the genius that opium had so nigh wrecked.'

One cannot pass the Nab without thoughts of the happy wooing of the maiden Margaret, who, at a time when De Quincey was driven along these roads nigh maddened with the dream of some awful crocodile that pursued him, became to him a very Electra, to soothe and to give him strength.

It was in 1816 she left this quiet home to be De Quincey's wife. It was some years after she dwelt here for a short time with him, driven out of Townend by her husband's increase of books and bairns.

But other persons of taste, as Hawthorne suggests, have sat down at this cottage. Here Derwent Coleridge dwelt a while, and here, too, affectionately cared for by one of Nature's gentlemen, lived till his death one who to the end preserved 'A young lamb's heart amid the full-grown flocks,' one who 'without a strife slipped in a moment out of life' on Saturday, January 6, 1849,—Hartley Coleridge.

Truly Nab cottage has seen the tragedies of heavenly minds at war with human frailties. Hartley Coleridge, stumbling along the road after dark; De Quincey returning from a midnight ramble—the little candle in the window ever kept to light the weary

dreamers home; the fair form of Margaret Simpson; the tall figures of Southey or of Wordsworth bending as they stoop to pass the low doorway; the sound of high argument, such impassioned discourse—these are memories of sight and sound that haunt this little roadside cottage.

But we can never pass without a thought of good, faithful old Richardson and his wife Eleanor, who ‘sarvat lâl Hartley so weel the time they kep him at the Nab,’ the last twelve years of the poet’s life.

And from that upper window came the sound of agony of prayer. He who wrote that exquisite sonnet—

Be not afraid to pray, to pray is right,

spent almost his last breath in availing prayers, and old Richardson used to speak with tears in his eyes of the solemn way in which ‘Mr. Wadsworth came down fra the Mount, and they all gethered round Hartley’s bed and took the Communion together, and prayed a deal, they did, before lâl Hartley died.’

Farewell, Nab Cottage—

I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
Lord of thy house and hospitality;
And Grief, uneasy lover, never rest
But when she sat within the touch of thee.

But there is that about thee that has so ministered to minds diseased, that thou hast the benison of every traveller that gazes and goes by.

WALLED OUT.

I.

In last Septimber it was, whin the weather is mostly grand,
 Wid the sunshine tarnin' the colour o' corn all over the land,
 An' the two young gintlemin came to shoot wid their guns an'
 their dogs,

A-thrampin' just for divarsion about the hills an' the bogs.
 An' I thramped afther thim, tho' it's little divarsion I had,
 Carrin' the baskits an' all, but sure its mesilf was glad
 To arn the shillins at sunsit, an' iligant loonch be the way;
 Mate an' bread, an' a dhrop to dhrink—ye naded no more that
 day.

For, tho' 'twas thick o' the harvest, down here the bogs an' the
 hills

Lave on'y narrow slips o' fields for the furrows an' pratie dhrills;
 Terrible quick they're raped an' dug; but what should the farmer
 do?

If there's on'y wark for wan, he can't find wages for two.

II.

An' wanst we were ristin' a bit in the sun on the smooth hill-side,
 Where the grass fild warm to yer hand as the flace av a shape, for
 wide

As ye'd look overhid an' around 'twas all a-blaze an' aglow;
 An' the blue was blinkin' up from the blackest bog-houles below;
 An' the scint o' the bogmint was sthrong on the air, an' niver a
 sound

But the plover's pipe that ye'll seldom miss be a lone bit o'
 ground.

An' he laned—Misther Pierce—on his ilbow, an' sthared at the
 sky as he smoked,

Till just in an idle way he sthretched out his hand an' sthroked
 The fithers o' wan o' the snipe that was kilt and lay close by on
 the grass;

An' there was the death in the crathur's eyes like a breath upon
 glass.

An' says he: 'It's quare to think that a houle ye might bore wid a pin

'Ill be wide inough to let such a power o' darkness in

On such a power o' light; an' it's quarer to think,' says he,

'That wan o' these days the like is bound to happen to you an' me.'

Thin Misther Barry, he says: 'Musha, how's wan to know but there's light

On t'other side o' the dark, as the day comes aafter the night?'

An' 'Och,' says Misther Pierce, 'what more's our knowin'—save the mark—

Than guessin' which way the chances run, an' thinks I they run to the dark;

Or ilse agin now some glint av a bame 'd ha' come slithered an' slid;

Sure light's not aisy to hide, an' what for should it be hid?'

Up he stood wid a sort o' laugh: 'If on light,' says he, 'ye're sit, Let's make the most o' this same, as it's all that we're like to git.'

III.

Thim were his words, as I minded well, for often afore an' sin' The 'dintical thought 'ud bother me hid that samed to bother him thin;

An' many's the time I'd be wond'r'in' whatever it all might mane, The sky, an' the land, an' the bastes, an' the rist o' thim plain as plain,

An' all behint an' beyant thim a big black shadow let fall;

Ye'll sthrain the sight out o' yer eyes, but there it stands like a wall.

'An' there,' says I to mesilf, 'we're goin' wheriver we go,

But where we'll be whin we git there it's niver a know I know.'

Thin whiles I thought I was maybe a sthookawn to throuble me mind

Wid sthrivin' to comprehind onnatural things o' the kind;

An' quality, now, that have larnin', might know the rights o' the case,

But ignorant wans like me had betther lave it in pace.

IV.

Praste, tubbe sure, an' Parson, accordin' to what they say, The whoule matther's plain as a pikestaff, an' clare as the day,

An' to hare thim talk av a world beyant ye'd think at the laste
They'd been did an' buried half their lives, an' had thramped it
from wist to aist;

An' who's for above, an' who's for below they've as pat as if they
could tell

The name av ivery saint in Hiven an' ivery divil in Hell.

But throth it's mesilf niver sit much sthore be Parson nor yit
be Praste—

Whereby the wife she says I'm no more nor a haythin baste—
For mighty few o' thim's rael quality, musha, they're mostly a pack
O' playbians aich wid a tag to his name an' a long black coat to
his back;

An' it's on'y romancin' they are belike; a man must sthick be his
thrade,

An' *they* git their livin' by littin' on they know how wan's sowl is made.
An' in chapel or church they're bound to know somethin' for sure,
good or bad,

Or where'd be the sinse o' their prachin' an' prayers an' hymns an'
howlin' like mad?

So who'd go mindin' o' thim? barrin' women, in coorse, an' wanes,
That belave most aught ye tell thim if they don't understand what
it manes.

Bedad, if it worn't the nathur o' womin to want the wit,
Parson an' Praste I'm a-thinkin' might shut up their shop an' quit.
But, och, it's lost an' disthacted the crathurs 'ud be widout
Their bit o' divarsion on Sundays whin all of thim gits about,
Cluth'rin' an' pluth'rin' together like hins, an' a-roostin' in rows,
An' matin' their frins an' their neighbours, an' wearin' their dacint
clothes.

An' sure it's quare that the clargy can't iver agray to kape
Be tellin' the same throe sthory, sin' they know such a won'erful
hape;

For many a thing Praste tells ye that Parson says is a lie,
An' which has a right to be wrong the divil a much know I,
For all the differ I see 'twuxt the pair o' thim'd fit in a nut:
Wan for the Union, an' wan for the Lague, an' both o' thim bitther
as sut.

But Misther Pierce, that's a gintleman born, an' has college
larnin' an' all,
There he was stharin' no wiser than me where the shadow stands
like a wall.

V.

An' soon afther thin, it so happint, things grew that conthráy an'
 bad
 I fell to wond'rin' a dale if beyant there's aught betther at all to
 be had ;
 For the blacker this ould world looks, an' the more ye're bothered
 an' vexed,
 The more ye'll be cravin' an' longin' for somethin' ilse in the next ;
 While whiniver there's little that ails ye, an' all goes slither as
 grase,
 Ye don't so much as considher, bedad, if there's e'er such a place.
 The same as a man comin' home from his wark av a winther's
 night,
 Whin the wind's like ice, an' the snow an' the rain have him
 perished outright,
 His heart'll be sit on a good turf blaze up the chimney roarin'
 an' rid,
 That'll putt the life in him agin afore he goes to his bid ;
 Tho' on summer evenin's, when soft as silk was ivery breath that
 wint,
 He'd niver have asked for a fire, but tarned to his slape contint.

VI.

The first thing that wint agin us, an' sure we were rael annoyed,
 Was when Smithson, he that's steward at the Big House, he tuk
 an' desthroyed
 Rexy, our little white dog, who we'd rared from no more than
 a pup,
 For a matther o' four or five yare, an' had kep' him an' petted
 him up.
 Hoontin' the shape ? If ye'd sane him ye'd know they were tellin'
 a lie,
 He that wasn't the size av a rabbit, an' wouldn't ha' hurted a
 fly.
 An' the frinliest baste, morebetoken, ye'd find in a long day's
 walk,
 An' knowin' an' sinsible, too, as many a wan that can talk.
 I might come home arly or late, yit afore I was hard or sane,
 He'd be off like a shot an' mate me a couple o' perch down the
 lane ;

An' whiles ye'd be kilt wid laughin', that quare were his ways an'
 his thricks—
 But there he lay stone did be the gate at the back o' Hourigan's
 ricks;
 For it's crapin' home the crathur was in hopes to die nare his
 frins,
 On'y he couldn't crape no furdher wid the leg o' him smashed
 into splins.
 An' och but the house was lonesome whin we'd buried him down
 be the dyke,
 An' the childher bawled thimsilves sick, for they thought that
 there wasn't his like;
 An' just this night, comin' up to the door, I was thinkin' I'd give
 a dale
 For the sound o' his bark, an' the pat o' his paws, an' the wag o'
 his tail.

VII.

An' thin the winther began, on a suddint it samed, for the trees
 Were flamin' like fire in the wood when it tuk to perish an' freeze;
 An' thro' yer bones like a knife wint the wind that came keenin'
 around,
 An' after that wid the pours o' rain we were fairly drowned,
 For the wather'd be runnin' in sthrames benathe the stip at the
 door,
 An' t'ould thatch that's thick wid houles let it dhrip in pools on
 the floor,
 Till sorrow the fire ud' burn, wid the pate-sods no betther than
 mud,
 Sin' the sthacks thimsilves outside samed meltin' away in the
 flood.
 But the warst av it was those times, that, what wid the wet an'
 the frost,
 Ne'er a hand's tarn could be done in the fields, so wan's wages
 were lost.
 Many's the wake I could scarce git a job from wan ind to the
 other,
 An' many's the night they wint hungry to bid, both childher an'
 mother—
 An', begorra, the hardest day's wark a man iver did is to sit
 Wid his hands afore him at home, whin the childher haven't a bit.

Thin the wife tuk sick, an' was mortal bad, an' cravin' a dhrink
 as she lay,
 An' I couldn't so much as git her, the crathur, a sup o' tay ;
 An' the floor was says o' mud, an' the room a smother o' smoke,
 Till betwane thim all, begorra, me heart it was narely broke.

VIII.

But I mind wan Sathurday's night, whin we just were stharved
 wid the could,
 Me mother, she that we kape, an' that's growin' terrible ould,
 All av a hape she was crooched be the hearth that was black as yer
 grave,
 For clane gone out was the fire ; an' her ould hid niver 'ud lave
 Thrimblin' on like a dhrop o' rain that's riddy to fall from the
 row,
 The faster it thrimbles an' thrimbles the sooner it is to go.
 An' her poor ould hands were thrimblin' as she sthriched thim out
 for the hate,
 For she'd gone too blind to see that there wasn't a spark in the
 grate ;
 Nor bit nor sup she'd had but a crust o' dhry bread that day,
 'Cause our praties had rotted on us, an' we'd had to throw thim
 away ;
 An' I knowed she was vexed, for, sure, it's but doatin' she is
 after all,
 An' 'ill fret like a child whin she fales that her slice is cut skimpy
 an' small ;
 But other whiles she'd be gravin' that we'd not got quit of her yit,
 An' misdoubtin' we grudged away from the childher aich morsel
 she'd git.
 An' watchin' her sittin' there, an' remimb'rin' the life she'd
 led,
 For me father dhrank, an' she'd throuble enough to kape the pack
 av us fed,
 An' nary the comfort she'd now, an' she grown fable an' blind—
 I couldnt but think 'twas a cruel bad job for such as she if behind
 The blackness over beyant there was nought but could for the
 could,
 An' dark for the dark—no new warld at all to make aminds for the
 ould ;

Tho' in throth it 'ud have to be the quarest warld ye could name
That 'ud make it warth wan's while to ha' lived in the likes o'
this same.

IX.

But the dhrame I dhrimt that night was as strange as strange,
for thin
I thought I had come to a place whose aquil I niver was in,
An' nobody'd tould me 'twas out o' this warld, yit as soon as I
came
Just o' mysilf I knew it, as pape will in a dhrame.
An' it looked an iligant counthry, an' all in a glimmerin' green,
The colour o' laves in the spring, with a thrimble o' mist between ;
An' the smell o' the spring was in it, but the light that sthramed
over all
Was liker the shine av a sunsit whin laves are beginnin' to fall.

X.

An' two were talkin' togither, that must ha' been standin'
nare,
Tho' out of me sight they kep'; an' their voices were plisant to
hare.
An' wan o' thim says to the other : 'It's this I don't undherstand,
The sinse o' this wall built yonder around an' about the land '—
An', sure, as he spoke I saw where it paped thro' the boughs
close by—
'For,' says he, 'it hides our warld, as the thruth is hid be a lie,
From ivery sowl that's alive on the wary arth below,
Till ne'er such a place there might be at all, for aught they can
know.
But grand it 'ud be some mornin' to make it melt off like the
haze
An' lave thim a sight o' this land that they're comin' to wan o'
these days.
For look ye at Ireland, now, where they're just in a disperit state,
Wid the pape slapin' on mud, an' wantin' the morsel to ait ;
If they knew there was betther in sthore I dunno what harm could
be in't,
Or what it 'ud do but hearten them up, an' kape thim a bit
contint.'

XI.

Thin t'other: 'Mind ye, there's many that's new to this place,'
 says he,
 'Comes askin' the same as yersilf. But considher the way it
 'ud be.
 For whin wanst we' downed wid the wall, an' nothin' was lift to
 purvint
 The poor folks yonder behouldin' the grandeur we've here behint,
 An' narer a dale, belike, than they'd iver ha' thought or belaved,
 Who are the fools that 'ud stay any more where they're throubled
 and graved,
 An' wouldn't be off wid thim here? Why, now, when there's
 nought but a vast
 O' shadow and blackness afore him who looks to his death an' past,
 Why, even so there's a few comes in that life wid its wary wark
 Has dhruv intirely mad, till they laped to their inds in the dark.
 An' in Ireland, sure, this instant there's crowds o' thim sailin'
 bound
 Off to the States an' Sthralia, that's half o' the whoule warld round,
 Miles an' miles thro' the waves an' sthorms, an' whin they've got
 there, indade,
 No such won'erful lands, but just where their livin's aisier made.
 An' it's mostly the young folks go, so the ould do be frettin'
 sore,
 For thim that are gone they doubt 'ill come home in their time
 no more.
 An' dhrary as e'er the long winther's night is the lonesome
 summer's day,
 Whin there's nivr a sthir in the house, an' the childher are over
 the say.
 An', arrah, now, wouldn't it be the worst day that ould Ireland
 has known,
 Whin she'd waken an' find all the pable had quitted an' lift her
 alone?
 Niver a voice to be hard, or a hover o' smoke to be spied,
 An' sorrow a sowl to sit fut on the green o' the grass far an' wide,
 Till the roads ran lone thro' the land as the sthrame that most
 disolit flows,
 An' the bastes, sthrayed away in the fields, grew as wild as the
 kites an' the crows,

An' nowan to care what became o' the counthry lift stharin' an'
sthark—
But that's how 'twould happen if iver we let thim look clare
thro' the dark.'

XII.

An' the other, says he: 'Thru for ye; but what sames sthrange
to me yit
Is the notions they've larned down yonder in spite o' the scrane
ye've sit;
For there's many hares tell av a plisint place where a man 'ill go
whin he dies,
An' some be that sartin sure, you'd think they'd sane it all wid
their eyes.'

XIII.

'The rason o' that,' says he, 'is, we wouldn't let thim despair
Cliver an' clane, any more than we'd show thim the whoule av it
clare;
So wanst in a while we've given to some poor crathur o' thim
A glimpse at this place, but on'y lapt up in a mist like an' dim.
An' soon as it slips from their sight 'tis dhrowned in the darkness
dape,
Till sometimes they doubt afther all if 'twas aught but a dhrame
in their slape.
An' the rist spy nothin' at all, but they hare from the folks
that do,
An' they wish it so bad that often they belave they belave it's
thru.
But supposin' wan that was hungry could watch unbeknownst
thro' a chink
Where some had a faste preparin', the finest ye iver could think,
If he thought he'd a chance o' the thrate, sure it's quiet and still
he'd wait,
For fare if he came ere they called they'd be puttin' him out av
it sthaight.'

XIV.

That's all their discoorse I remimber, for thin, as sure as I'm
born,
It was Rexy's bark that I hard—no other baste's, I'll be sworn;

An' I couldn't till ye the plisure I tuk in't, for somehow the
 sound
 Samed givin' a nathural fale to whaitiver I'd sane around.
 An' I just was thinkin': 'It's mad wid joy, poor Raxy, he'd be if
 he knew
 There was wan av us come from t'ould place at home'—whin, och
 wirrasthrew,
 All in a minyit I opened me eyes where I lay on the floor,
 An' the child was keenin' away, an' the wind moanin' undher the
 door,
 An' the puddle was freezed by the harth, that hadn't a spark to
 show,
 An' outside in the could daylight the air was a-flutther wid snow,
 An' the black bank sthraked wid white like the bars on a magpie's
 wing—
 For sorrow a ward o' thruth was in't, an' I'd naught but dhramed
 the thing.

XV.

Sorrow a ward o' thruth—yit some says that they've niver a
 doubt
 But there's plenty o' thruth in a dhrame, if ye tarn it the right
 side out;
 An' I mind me mother, wan night she dhrimt av a ship on the say,
 An' next mornin' her Micky, the sogger, came home that was yares
 away.
 Thin a notion I have, as I woke, I'd hard one o' thim two inside
 Sayin': 'Slape, that's the chink for a glimpse, but death, that's
 the door set wide.'
 An' whin things do be cruel contráry, wid could an' the hunger
 an' all,
 Some whiles I fall thinkin': 'Sure, maybe, it's on'y a bit o' their
 wall;'
 So p'haps it's a fool that I am, but many's the time, all the same,
 I says to mesilf I'd be wishful for just a dhrame o' that dhrame.

AN ORIGINAL EDITION.

It was at a shabby second-hand book shop in H—— Street that I picked it up—or is that the right way to express it—should I not rather say it picked me up? Such was the marvellous attractive power which it possessed! I didn't want the book, I'd never even heard of it, and though, of course, the name of its author, Jean Jacques Rousseau, was familiar enough to my ears, I knew little enough really of either himself or his writings to desire to possess any of his works. Beyond a vague idea that he was a celebrated author and rather a bad lot, I was quite ignorant. Another thing, too, which prejudiced me against the man was, that having (to my mind) the misfortune to be born a Frenchman, he habitually wrote in the French language.

Now I am not a good linguist; the French language (and indeed every other, except the one which is my mother tongue) is to me comparatively unknown.

I still possess faint recollections, fast dying away and receding into the dim distance of the past, of painful and ineffectual struggles with certain odious and irregular verbs, the result of which was failure and many a weary hour spent in the company of a slate and a French grammar, while the shouts of my school-mates were borne by the breeze upon my longing ears, from the playground or the cricket-field to the lonely school-room, where I sat immured, the victim of a vindictive verb. Consequently I became possessed of a feeling of unutterable contempt for the benighted being who voluntarily submitted to be born a Frenchman and form one of a nation which commonly spoke of a tooth-brush as 'she,' and indulged in the imbecility of a masculine mustard-pot.

Have I advanced sufficient arguments to show why I, above all people, should be free from the weakness of desiring to possess a work in a language the understanding of which would involve the necessity of searching out the meaning of every other word in a dictionary? I think so; but there is yet another. The book was evidently an original edition, octavo, bound in—what I couldn't exactly say; it wasn't calf, but had rather the appearance of vellum or parchment of some description, as far as I could judge, who

was no connoisseur of books or bindings. Just the sort of thing, you will say, to make an antiquarian's mouth water, only I was no antiquarian, and my bookcase, such as it was, rejoiced in a goodly array of books bound in all the colours of the rainbow, blue and green and red, together with a not inconsiderable number of the two-shilling railway novels, such as my soul loved. When I bought a book I liked it to be brand new, with gilt edges, and got up in a style which reflected credit on its possessor: none of your second-hand rubbish for me.

Why on earth, then, did I buy that book which I didn't want, in a language I couldn't understand, written by a man I knew nothing about? I asked myself at the time and I ask myself now, why did I do it? and give the only answer I have ever been able to give, at that or any other time—I don't know and I never shall know.

I was walking calmly and peacefully along, taking the middle of the road in preference to the path, which involved jostling and being jostled by others who were in a hurry themselves, and resented the fact of my having so much spare time on my hands. I was walking, I repeat, up the middle of the narrow thoroughfare with my hat at the back of my head and my hands in my pockets, at peace with myself and the world. Even towards those who came into collision with me, who trod on my toes viciously and poked me in the ribs aggressively, I had no feeling save that of a gentle pity, to think that they so little understood the art of taking things easily, when suddenly my eye was struck by the title-page of an open book, which, though on the top shelf of a shop window, and of no great size or of a particularly alluring aspect, seemed to stand out from among its fellows and forcibly compel my attention.

'Du Contrat Social, ou Principes du Droit Politique,' was what I read on the title-page, and at the same time I was seized with a perfectly irresistible and unaccountable desire to possess the volume. I came to a full stop in the middle of the roadway, causing an impolite remark to issue from the lips of a stout gentleman carrying a basket of strawberries, who was walking immediately behind me. I did not resent the remark; indeed, when I saw the strawberries rolling in the gutter, I felt that under the circumstances it was even justifiable.

I did not help him to pick them up, as perhaps I should have done, for I was too much occupied in feeling in my pockets and

making an inventory of their contents. Seventeen-and-six, a cigar holder (cracked), a three-bladed knife, two toothpicks, and a latch-key were the sum total. There was no price marked on the book, strange to say, though all its companions were duly ticketed. Did that mean that its value was 'far above rubies,' or that 'no reasonable offer would be refused'?

I was now standing on the pathway staring hard at the bait, which somehow or other, without my having the faintest idea why, exercised such a powerful influence over me; then all at once it struck me what an egregious ass I was to think of throwing away my money in purchasing what I didn't want; and I didn't want the thing in the least, no, not I. So, jamming my hat firmly over my eyes (an expression of determination) and taking my hands out of my pocket, I set off at a good round pace for, it might have been 50 yards, more or less, probably less, when I suddenly came to a full stop. It was no good; I was thinking about that wretched book all the time and wondering what it was about (which I never succeeded in finding out), and to whom it had belonged originally. 'Hang it all!' I thought to myself, 'I'll go and ask what the price is. Perhaps'—and there was a sense of relief in the idea—'it's more than seventeen-and-six, old and shabby as it looks,' though I was not so ignorant as to be unaware that, generally speaking, it is the oldest books which fetch the highest prices.

This time I entered boldly at the door of the dark little den, which was piled from floor to ceiling with volumes of every description and size. The proprietor was an unwashed gentleman of the Hebraic type, who, emerging from a background of so much dust and cobwebs, had the air of a species of human spider in a greasy smoking-cap and carpet slippers. To him, after a pretence of turning over and examining some of the mouldy-looking volumes which littered the counter, I put the question, 'Oh—er—what do you want for that book of what's-his-name's? French chap, you know—Rousseau's the name, I think; it's in the window. I don't particularly want it, but if it's going cheap I don't mind——' I stopped short, for the old reptile was regarding me with a look I couldn't understand, in which exultation seemed to struggle with malice and produce a result which was as unbecoming to himself as it was unpleasant to the beholder.

'You want to know the price of Rousseau's "Social Contract"?' Ah, there is a book, a most rare book! A book that is worth its weight in gold. There is probably not its fellow to be found in

this country—or any other' (I bade a mental farewell to this literary treasure). 'It is, in fact, unique of its kind.'

'Well,' I said, 'if it is such a rare and curious edition as all that, I'm afraid I shan't be able to afford it; though I don't know why you should set so much store by it; it isn't much to look at, at any rate the binding's nothing.'

To my surprise this innocent remark appeared to cause him the most profound and exquisite amusement. As I looked at him in astonishment, his dirty sallow complexion became suffused with a purple tinge, the veins in his forehead swelled as though they would burst, and a sort of hoarse wheezing sound bore evidence that some inward disturbance was taking place.

'The binding,' he croaked at last, 'the good gentleman objects to the binding. I assure him the binding is most uncommon and costly beyond anything of the sort ever met with.' 'All right,' I thought to myself, 'go on—pile it up. It's quite evident that he's going to ask something quite beyond my means, the lying old impostor.' 'In fact,' he continued with a fiendish chuckle, which would have done credit to Barnaby Rudge's raven, 'it is an "édition de luxe," and the price is,' looking me up and down, from my hat, which had seen considerable wear, to my boots, which had been re-soled twice, 'the price is—three-and-six.'

By Jove! I thought to myself, what a come down after the rhapsody he'd been indulging in. Somehow I didn't seem to care so much for the book now that it was within my reach. 'Three-and-six!' and I moved towards the door. 'I don't know, after all, that I care about the thing. I——'

'But, my good gentleman,' he continued, in tones of anxiety, 'consider what a bargain! A rare work, an original edition, and only—— You shall have it for half a crown!'

'Perhaps,' I remarked, surprised by his eagerness to rid himself of this, according to him, valuable edition, 'it is imperfect?'

'Not a leaf injured. You shall examine it for yourself.' He went towards the window, and mounting a pair of steps, proceeded to remove the volume from its position. In some way or other, in doing this, it slipped and fell, one corner striking him in the eye with considerable force. It evidently inflicted some pain, and he responded in curses not loud, but deep, and evidently coming from the bottom of his heart. 'Take it,' he said, blinking at me out of his uninjured eye, 'take it; you shall have it for two shillings.' With this offer, after a brief inspection which showed the book to be uninjured and the title-page intact, I closed, and left

the shop with my purchase under my arm. Something caused me to look back on reaching the end of the short street, and I saw my bookselling friend standing at the door of his shop, with a red cotton handkerchief tied over one eye, which made him appear still less inviting than before, and rubbing his hands with what looked like great glee and self-gratulation.

'Queer old fish!' I thought to myself, 'he can't have made much out of this bargain. Anyone would think he was new to the business to let a book like this go so dirt cheap. Yet he looked 'cute enough too!'

I took an omnibus at the Circus. There were three or four other people in it besides myself, including a gouty old gentleman and a woman with a baby. I dislike a woman with a baby—or, indeed, any other combination which includes a baby. With regard to the old gentleman, I had the misfortune to drop my new purchase on his gouty foot. I had no wish to drop it on that particular foot, but would just as soon have dropped it on the other, if the choice had been given me; but from the language in which he indulged you might have thought that the outrage had been premeditated and carried out of malice prepense.

Then I sat down by the baby, and the baby screamed itself black in the face in less than five minutes; to whom its fond parent vainly addressed words of mystic consolation. 'Didn't 'um like a nasty man, then, and did 'um frighten 'um's precious pets out of 'um's pretty wits?'

After all, when I inspected my purchase there didn't seem to be much to congratulate myself upon with regard to it. It was large octavo in size, of rather less than 200 pages in thickness, the paper yellow, the print faded, and the binding—I turned it over and over, but there was nothing in the least to justify the extravagant encomiums lavished upon it by its last owner. What it was bound in seemed to be a species of parchment or vellum, which had also become yellow and discoloured by time and use. I shut it up after a brief inspection of its contents, and laid it aside while I discussed a nondescript meal, which began with cold mutton and ended with marmalade. I had closed the book and laid it on the mantel-piece out of the way; and here I may mention that I found the back very stiff, and the book not easy to open in consequence—in fact, it shut immediately of its own accord, directly one removed one's hand.

It was a peculiar creaking sound which made me turn my head in the direction of the empty fireplace, which now, in the month

of June, contained nothing but torn envelopes, burnt matches, and other untidy litter of a bachelor's apartment. To my amazement, I found that the noise came from the book I had just bought, and which was slowly and deliberately opening of its own accord. There must be something peculiar about the binding, which allowed the volume thus to open when I had found considerable difficulty in making it do so, and when even then it obstinately refused to remain open without being held.

I rose and looked at it where it lay flat open on the shelf, at Chapter V., the title of which was, 'Du droit de vie et de mort,' and even my limited stock of French allowed me to translate the phrase as 'The right of life and death.' I shut the book up, and then tried whether it would open again at the same place—perhaps this had been a favourite chapter with one of its previous owners, which might account for it. But no! the book once shut refused to reopen without a considerable wrench; the leaves seemed to adhere together in a peculiar manner, and felt damp and clammy to the touch, so I put it down again, and lighting a pipe, went and sat by the open window and watched the passers-by. Presently I was almost startled to hear the same peculiar sound coming from behind me. This time I knew at once where to look. There was that confounded 'Social Contract' slowly and deliberately opening again, just as though some invisible hand had hold of it. I made two strides to the fireplace. Yes, there it was, open at the same place as before—Chapter V., 'Du droit de vie et de mort.' 'Hang Chapter V. and its confounded title!' I muttered to myself as I banged the lids together and clapped a big dictionary on the top to keep it shut. I was tired of M. Jean Jacques and his vagaries.

I could have taken a solemn oath as to the manner in which I left it, but in the morning I found the position of affairs reversed—the dictionary was underneath, and on the top was that blessed book, lying wide open at Chapter V.!

I spoke pretty sharply to the woman who looks after my chambers. 'Look here, Mrs. Jenkins! I've told you, once for all, that I won't have my things touched or meddled with in any way, and if you and your duster can't be content with the tables and chairs, you'll have to go.'

'The Lord bless and save us, if I've so much as laid a finger tip on one of them books or papers, much as they want it, seeing it was your orders, and me a widder with two pore orphans depending on me for their daily bread and treacle, let alone a bit of something tasty now and then, sich as tripe or liver, or——'

'Then you're sure you haven't touched any of my books, or moved anything on the mantel-piece?'

'I give you my word, solemn, and on my bended knees, if thought necessary, though what with the stairs and the scrubbing they're that stiff—that what with your boots and the breakfast, and me oversleeping myself, through cow-heels for supper, I haven't so much as touched the leg of a chair, or been within a yard of the mangel-piece, whatever my wishes might have been.'

I began to think that either I or the book, or both, were bewitched. I was out nearly all that day, and hardly know whether I was surprised or not when, on coming home, I found the 'Contract Social,' which I had left shut up in a drawer with several other odd volumes and magazines, lying on its face on the floor, still open at Chapter V., while the other contents of the drawer, which was standing open, were in a state of the wildest disorganisation. I had left the windows shut and the door locked, and found both in the same condition on my return. No one could possibly have gained admission. What did it mean? I was lost in wonderment!

That night when I retired to rest I took the thing with me and placed it under my pillow, thinking that I should thus be sure of no one meddling with it. Of the horrors of that night I can hardly speak without fear of incurring the charge of extravagance and exaggeration.

I suppose I must have gone off to sleep very quickly, though what followed seemed so real—so horribly, so fantastically real—that it is hard, even now, to believe that after all it was only a dream. I thought that I suddenly found myself in a vast gloomy cavern. So dark was it that at first I could not distinguish its dimensions and extent, but after a time a ray of ghostly white light pierced through the darkness, which increased and broadened slowly but surely, until it lit up all surroundings with a lurid ghastly radiance. Then I saw that what I at first took for a cavern was, in reality, a vast charnel-house, from the damp, noisome walls of which rills of water trickled ceaselessly down upon dark, inanimate, recumbent forms which covered the ground, so that it was impossible to stir without coming in contact with some one of them.

Once I moved or tried to move, for I was palsied with horror, but at the first motion something fell rattling down from a niche above my head—something which passed so closely that it brushed my face as it fell, and then lay motionless at my feet—a

human skull, with wide, empty eye-sockets, and white, grinning teeth! Then from the gloom at the farthest end of the cavern there came a voice! Such an unearthly, awful voice, which sounded as though the tongue of the speaker were swollen and protruding. 'Brothers and sisters of the guillotine, rise and greet the stranger!' There was a sound as of the rustling of grave clothes on every side, as the dark, shapeless forms rose upright upon their fleshless feet; row upon row, men and women, every one of them with features distorted with agony—blackened lips drawn back showing the clenched teeth, quivering eye-balls, and distended nostrils—while round the neck of almost every one was a thin red line. They came nearer and nearer, closing me in on every side, rank behind rank; in a moment more I should be pressed and trodden underfoot by their bloodless skeleton feet. Again there came the voice—that indescribably horrible voice from the gloomy unseen recesses of that fearful place. 'Brothers and sisters, take him; he is yours, serve him as they served you at Meudon!' Hundreds of bony arms were stretched out to seize me. I was almost in their grasp, when with the supreme horror of the moment I shrieked and woke. Woke with the sound of my own voice ringing in my ears and the perspiration pouring from me. Woke shaking as with an ague, with horrible voices still gibbering in my ears. It was some moments before I could sufficiently command myself so as to rise and strike a light. When I did so I found it was ten minutes to three o'clock, and on beholding my ghastly face in the glass, found it hard to believe that I had merely suffered from an extra bad attack of nightmare.

I looked towards the bed, when I saw on the pillow close to where my head had lain, that cursed 'Social Contract,' which I knew I had placed under it, standing up on end, balancing itself carefully on the soft, uneven surface, wide open as before. Opening my window wide, I took the book in my hand and flung it from me with all my strength.

The next evening, when I was congratulating myself on having got rid of my tormentor, I received a visit from my old chum Jack Margreaves, who had been out of town and whom I had consequently not seen for a week or two. I was delighted to see him again, and we smoked two or three pipes together, while he told me all he had been doing since we last met. Suddenly he stopped short.

'By Jove! I'd quite forgotten,' putting his hand in his pocket. 'Is this yours, old man? I found it lying on the door-

step as I came in, as though someone had dropped it there,' and he laid before me on the table the book I had thought myself well rid of. My look, I suppose, surprised him, for he asked, 'What's up? Isn't it right?'

'Yes, yes,' I hastened to reply. 'It's my book, but I don't care much for it, because it's written in French, and that's a language I don't know much about.'

Now Jack's a capital French scholar—spent two years at a school near Rouen, so when, after looking at the book, which he knew well by repute and declared to have been a powerful instrument in helping forward the French Revolution, he asked me to lend it to him for a day or two, I was only too glad to let him have it. He took it away with him, and I slept in peace that night, undisturbed by any of the horrors which had haunted my dreams of the night before. It was some two or three days afterwards that he came to my rooms again. He seemed rather thoughtful, and several times seemed on the brink of saying something; finally he remarked:

'That's a queer sort of book you lent me, that work of Rousseau's. Is there—though it seems ridiculous to ask such a question—is there anything uncanny about it? I can't make the thing out.'

'Why—how?' I put in breathlessly.

'Why,' he continued, 'it's always shifting itself about, as though it were a live thing. If I put it in one place, I'm bound to find it in another. Once I locked it up in my cupboard, but it was no good; I found it lying outside on the floor and everything in the greatest confusion inside, as though it had been having a battle royal with the other books and upset them all. One night I kept it in my bedroom——'

'Ah!' I interrupted, 'and what was the result? Tell me; I am anxious to know!'

'Then there *is* something in it?' he replied, removing his pipe and looking at me steadily, 'and it isn't all my confounded liver, as I persuaded myself, or tried to.'

'I'll tell you all I know about it afterwards; only go on, tell me what happened in your bedroom.'

'Oh, nothing very much, only when I woke up suddenly in the middle of the night, I heard, or thought I heard, a sound as though someone were turning over the leaves of the book, which I had left on the chest of drawers—turning them over very fast. I sat up in bed, but couldn't see anything, and then the book seemed

to be suddenly shut up with a bang, and there came a sound as though it had been thrown from one end of the room to the other. I don't mind telling you, old fellow, that I felt a bit scared for a minute or two.'

I nodded my head at him in encouragement and he continued. 'But when I struck a light, there was nothing and no one to be seen, except the book, lying face downwards, at the other end of the room, farthest from the chest of drawers where I had laid it.'

We both remained silent for some time when he had finished his statement; then I told him my experience from the time of my purchasing the book (not forgetting the extraordinary eagerness on the part of the old bookseller to part with it), and my awful dream, including the mysterious occurrence of his finding the book on the doorstep after I had thrown it out of window the night before. When we parted it was with the agreement that he should deliberately set himself to lose the volume, which must surely have had an evil spell laid upon it by some former possessor. The next evening he came rushing in upon me with great satisfaction depicted on his countenance. He had laid it upon a seat in one of the parks, then retired behind a tree and watched the result. In a short time an evil-looking, cadaverous individual (I quote from my friend's description) had, after loitering about for a few minutes, seized the book and made off with it under his arm. So we were free from that pest. I ordered up the hot water and lemons, and we prepared to enjoy ourselves for the rest of the evening. An hour or more had passed in convivial intercourse, when there came a knock at the outer door—a single loud knock which struck us into instant silence. Mrs. Jenkins had long left my chambers for the bosom of her family and something hot for supper. Instinctively we both rose together, and went to ascertain who was the intruder at that late hour of the night. Throwing open the door, we were confronted by a tall dark figure, who, by the light of the hall lamp, seemed possessed of a singularly unprepossessing countenance. We regarded him in silence and suspicion. Stretching out his arm he offered me an object. 'Yours!' was the only word he uttered, and then turning away, disappeared into the darkness without.

Who was he and whence came he, and how, without a scrap of evidence or a word of writing to guide him, had he sought me out and restored the book to me? for we both knew, without a syllable being spoken on either side, what it was that had been returned so mysteriously.

'What's to be done now?' at last I asked, after we had laid the volume on the table in my sitting-room. Jack thought for a moment, then pointing towards the empty grate briefly uttered the words, 'Burn it!'

Instantly we began looking about for the materials with which to construct a fire. A cigar-box or two were broken up, newspapers were added, and there was soon a cheerful blaze roaring away up the chimney. I took the book in my hand to cast it on its funeral pyre, but even then, much as I desired to see the end of it, something made me hesitate. As I held it loosely in my hand, half open, I saw that the leaves had once more parted at the old place. 'Chapitre V. Du droit de vie et de mort.'

Holding it thus exposed to the heat of the fire, while Jack added the remains of yet another cigar-box to help the blaze, I saw that on the broad margin of the book were faint marks, as of written characters, gradually becoming plainer as the fire acted upon them.

'See,' I said, my words almost falling over each other in my excitement, 'see, here is something written in what must have been an invisible ink—red ink, too—and the heat of the fire is bringing it out plainer every moment. Read it, read it,' I said, thrusting the book into his hands; for the sentence thus revealed was written in crabbed characters and in the French language. I saw his face change, and a look of gradually increasing horror steal across it as he first deciphered the meaning of the sentence and read it over to himself.

'What is it, man? Speak out, for Heaven's sake!' I exclaimed in an agony of excitement and agitation. Almost in a whisper came the answer. 'At Meudon, in 1794, there was a tannery of human skins, where such of the guillotined as were deemed worth the flaying were tanned, and their skins made excellent soft leather for the binding of books and many other purposes, but it is said there is a curse upon all things thus made. This book is bound——' The writing was fading out again as I looked over his shoulder while he read these words.

Snatching the volume from his hand, I turned to the title-page—'Meudon, 1794.' We both saw the inscription and looked at one another in blank horror and amazement. The next moment I had cast the accursed thing upon the blaze. There it curled and writhed like a living thing, until a tongue of flame caught it, and in a few seconds there was nothing left but a handful of white ashes.

NOTES BY A NATURALIST.

THE HERON AND ITS HAUNTS.

THE heron—the Jack Hern of the marsh-men—was at one time a common bird in those localities which were suited to that bird's habits and means of living. His being a notable figure in history has been, and is still, a disadvantage to him, for he has suffered from an ill reputation which clings to him to this day, but which he only gained through being misunderstood. His appearance and bearing are remarkable, and have always commanded attention. Hungry as a heron, lean as a heron, long-shanked as a heron, are common expressions with people who do not take the trouble to investigate his character more closely. Much has been written about him from an able and a more scientific point of view than I care to take here, but a great deal of nonsense also. One author, speaking of the heron and his habits, calls him 'a picture of wretchedness, anxiety, and indigence, condemned to struggle perpetually with misery and want; and sickened by the cravings of a famished appetite.' Fine sounding words these, but there is no sense in them. Such a description is noways applicable to my old acquaintance, the common grey heron. He is a bird of many qualities, patient, strong, and brave. Very rarely does he put himself in a temper; when he indulges in that luxury it is the same with him as with some people who are usually quiet; and the further you get away from him the better.

But why men and boys should rush for a gun to shoot him down as though he were some dangerous animal I cannot tell. That mark of attention has been paid him for successive ages; but in the olden time only the great could deal with him, as he was then in grace of sanctuary. The monks might grumble when they saw him round their fish-stews, but they were compelled to let him be. A cast of jerfalcon or peregrines used to bring him to earth, and then the falconer had to be quick to prevent mischief, for if his neck was free, that long bill would be used with deadly effect, and his claws would clutch like a cat's. When living he was held in the highest estimation, and when dead also. For the heron and his near neighbour and kinsman, the bittern, graced

the abbot's table as well as that of the nobility. A royal bird of those days one might style him, for royalty itself framed laws for his protection and special benefit.

Even now they will kill him for eating in the wild marsh-lands when they can get him. I have seen him hanging up in the poulterers' shops for sale as an article of diet. He commands a good price in some places. A clean feeder he is, and his food is fresh, for he has it alive.

From my childhood I have known the bird well, and all his habits and characteristics. With an inborn passionate love for all wild creatures, I was left, as a boy, to my own devices in that wild marsh-land district which I have already written about; and I knew practically as much about the birds that frequented our shore then as I do now. My knowledge was gained by wading through reeds, crawling between hillocks, lying flat and wriggling like an eel, to watch the waders and gulls feed and wash in the pools from morning to night. A lonely boy, I tried to scrape acquaintance with the creatures about me, and it grew to be the delight and pastime of my youth, and the interest and pleasure of maturer years.

Jack Hern, as I called him then, is a bird of sober-coloured plumage, grey, black, and white. The bill has a yellow tint, and the legs are a dull light olive-green. These tones are so disposed, however, that the eye is satisfied. Everyone who has studied birds and animals in their haunts must have noted how the colouring of the creatures harmonises with their surroundings. So much the better for them.

I have studied him in many different places since my boyhood—on the moorlands, by river and stream, in the meadows and ploughed fields; among the lush tangled herbage of a bog swamp, and in the trees; and my affection for the heron has strengthened with my knowledge of him and his ways.

Let us observe him where I knew him first. Morning, noon, and night, according to the flow and ebb of the tide, you will find him on the sea-shore. Speaking from my own experience, the herons are more numerous there in winter than in summer. The parts of the shore close to the marshes left bare by the tide are singularly lonely. The sun shines hotly on the dreary flats, and the pools flash and glitter. With the exception of a pair of Ring Dotterels piping about, not another sound is to be heard. The hot air quivers over the flats and saltings; not even a gull is to be

seen, for they are having a rest by some shallow pool, clear as crystal, in the marshes near at hand.

Mud flats and pools mingle together in a blue flickering haze in the distance. There is no life overhead, but you will find plenty close to your feet. The mud flats here are hard slub; you can walk over them without fear of quags to swallow you up to the knees, and deeper, unless you throw yourself backwards and scratch out somehow. Winkles are all over the place, crawling slowly like snails, and leaving their tracks behind them. Here is a pool left by the tide; so clear the water is that the most minute crab or fish can be distinctly seen. What a collection of creatures dart about hither and thither as we lift up a mass of snapper-weed in the pool: small fish of various kinds, the greater part young plaice and flounders, with the common green crab of the saltings, from the little nippers no larger than a shilling to those near the size of your closed fist, which congregate in hosts, thousands upon thousands of them, in some parts of our coasts. Some would imagine it to be a wild-goose chase coming to look for the heron on these bare, hot, steaming flats, but we have found him here before, and shall do so now.

Mussel scalps, as they are called, abound here.

There is a fitness in local terms which strikes one more forcibly than pleasantly, as you would find if your bare shins were to scrape an acquaintance with the sharp edges of the shells, which cut like knives. These scalps vary in height from that of a gallon to a bushel measure. Advancing with slow steps between them and the pools, we startle a heron from behind one of the larger ones. Up he springs, with rough, croaking scream, and flaps away with a lazy flight, for his stomach is full, and he has been disturbed from a nap in the shade of the mussel scalps. Presently another rises, with a small eel about a foot long wriggling about in his bill, and this gives the alarm to a couple more who were near at hand. It would seem strange to a casual observer that so large a bird could escape notice on the bare flats, but the reason he so often does so—and they are rarely seen until you get close to them—is that the slub is grey in tone of colouring, also the white breast of the bird falls in with the bright flash of the pools lit up in the sunlight; one is blended into the other, and the instinct of self-preservation, which is very fully developed in him, saves him often from harm. Like the rook, he has some means of knowing if it is a gun you are carrying, or merely a stick. I have

proved this to be so, over and over again. I cannot account for it in any way, but the fact remains : if you point a stick at him in gun fashion, he does not mind it in the least ; but a gun presented is the instant signal for speedy flight.

Like other living creatures, he finds change necessary to him at times, and he quits the marshes for the sea-shore at his own time and pleasure. He finds the pools about the right depth for wading, and altogether convenient ; for, as a rule, they are merely depressions in the slub, a few inches deep. The flounder may scuttle down, leaving only his head and eyes exposed, the head slightly raised, looking more like the head of the cobra than anything else in nature. What curious likenesses we find at times in creatures whose mode of life is so utterly different ! Well hidden as Mr. Flounder thinks himself, it is not enough, for Jack Hern's quick eye has seen him. The bird's neck is drawn back for one moment, and the stroke is made. Far better than any large fork lashed on to a stick is the bill of the heron. The fish may kick and wriggle as only a flounder can, but he will not get away from that grip. This victim is some three inches in width ; watch it in the process of disappearance. The fish is tossed up and caught head foremost, and he gulps him down as far as his neck. That is long and thin, but its power of expansion is very great. The passage of the fish can be plainly seen, for the neck becomes fan-shaped where the fish sticks for a moment on its way to the bird's stomach. However, the matter is soon over, as the fish folds in on both sides, and the devourer is ready to repeat the process with something else. Small tender crab, shrimp, prawn, or sand-hopper, also sand-worms, and many more little pickings are there for him. He lives well in summer, but he does not get fat any more than the great marsh-hares that often sit up and look at him as he prowls about, especially when the tiny leverets are located in some slight hollow between the mole hillocks. Fat is not found on either them or him—not in the proper sense of the word.

Let us have a good look at him after he has been shot, dead ; certainly not till we are sure of that fact, for I have a profound respect for the fighting capabilities of the heron. Falcons, hawks, and owls can use their bills and claws with effect—I can speak feelingly on that subject—but I would rather deal with the three of them together than with Master Heron when he is only wing-tipped by the shot and his temper is roused.

There he is dead at our feet, however. Pick him up and

examine him. Begin with his dagger of a bill; it is six inches long. Feel the tip and its serrated edges. Look at the gape he has. Pass your hand down his neck to the shoulders; there is muscle there. Press the eyelids back with the finger tip and look at his keen hawk-like eye. Notice the bend of the wing from the shoulder, and feel the muscles that move his broad wings in flight. Grand wings they are. Take the tip of one flight feather and stretch the wings; or, better still, hold them out in front of you with both hands. You will be surprised at their length and width. Now finish with his legs and feet. Wonderful feet they are, and the same may be said of the other members of his tribe. Surely the stilts of the marsh-men, with the flat pieces at the ends to prevent their sinking and sticking in the soft surface of the marshes, had their origin in the first instance in a close examination of the heron's legs and feet. Feel his long toes. How lithe they are! You can bend them at your will, up and down and sideways. So could the bird when alive, and in twenty different directions to your one; for he could climb and cling to anything with them, perch on trees, step about as gingerly as a cat, wade anywhere, and, when he thought fit, swim also. He is a bird of varied accomplishments, and they are all useful to him, serving his purpose each one in its turn, which is more than can be said of the accomplishments of some members of the human family.

Take him for all in all, he is a feathered Moss-Trooper. Luxuriously as he fares in summer, in winter the tune is changed. No more lazy flappings over the marsh from pool to pool, and from one dyke to another through an atmosphere bathed in the soft, hazy, golden light of sunset—bird and sky, land and water, alike glorified in its long slanting rays. How often have I gazed on such a scene in my old marshland home! A few more years and it will be a rarer sight; for the marshes have been drained in many counties, and where the heron had his home you will soon see cornfields and fruit orchards.

Winter has come, but no snow has fallen yet; the air is too cold for it to come down. Marsh and dykes are frozen hard; the keen winds from the sea cut bitterly, making the reeds and flags, now dry and withered, clash and rattle again as they rush over the flats. In that clump of tangled reed, flag, rush, and coarse bents is the heron, standing on one leg, warm and snug, his head and neck drawn in to his shoulders. The wind may blow its

hardest, but it only knits the tangle closer. It is no trouble for him to make a way in and out as he requires it. The tide is just near the ebb turn; when it is fairly on the ebb he will be moving. Although there is no town clock to tell him the time, he knows, in some way or other, to a minute when the tide has fairly turned. And now he rises from his place of refuge, right in the middle of the tangle in which he had been hiding. His long, limber, clinging toes enable him to grasp the reeds and flags in order to climb sufficiently high to give room for his wings to play. His cousin the bittern is more expert in the art of getting up out of cover than is the heron, but then he is also more given to hiding himself.

Now he is well up, and he comes on with some more herons after him. This is the time to note his play of wing, for the wind blows strong. The birds try to beat to windward, but the blast catches them, turning them fairly up on one side. They thresh and flap vigorously to recover their balance, and succeed in doing so after a time, to be caught again in the same manner. Over the sea wall and on over the saltings they flap, and they drop down close to the edge of the ebbing tide. But what a change is this from their summer haunts. The haze that flickered over the slub and softened the distance has given place to the keen clear air of winter, when the dry black frosts hold the marsh and dykes in their icy grip. Sails of ships can be seen in the offing, and the minster tower stands out in clear relief against the sky. About a mile away a dark cloud appears to hang over the water, towards which it falls and rises again. On the water a long line of black shows. It is a gaggle of Brent geese, part of which are on the water, paddling on the ebb; the rest have risen on wing and are dipping and flapping up and down, impatient for the long sea grass to show bare for them to graze on. Other birds rush up for their share from the shingle of the beach five miles away—dunlins, sanderlings, and knots. The curlews are there as a matter of course; where the lug or sandworm is abundant you will find those birds in great numbers. The heron has no longer the shore to himself as he had it in summer; others share it with him, as well as the food that the tide leaves. The dunlins run nimbly over the surface left bare, busily pecking and dibbing at something in or on the slub. If you rouse a flock of them and look at the place where they were, you will see thousands of little depressions left by the tips of their bills. Their prey must be

very small—minute crustaceans, probably, or the spat of some mollusk. The saunderlings and knots keep more apart. The tangle round stones finds favour with them. They will mix with the dunlins at times, and with curlews in close company, but not one of them will get within reach of the heron. One blow and a grip, a dabble in the water to wet the poor victim's feathers and make them lie closer, and little Master Dunlin, or any other bird of his size, goes down his gullet at a gulp. Look at them following the tide, with neck stretched out and bill a little open, ready for anything. Now and then it looks as if a squabble were going on, as some one heron, more fortunate than another, gets a better find; of course the one next to him wants to share it, and then ensue sundry flappings of wings and extraordinary dancing movements. One or two rise and drop down again a few yards away to continue their search. What they feed on could only be found out by first shooting one, and then examining the contents of his stomach. Scores of birds of all sorts are shot, skinned, and stuffed, and their bodies eaten, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the stomach is never inspected. It is very convenient to say this bird, or that small animal, feeds almost exclusively on such and such a diet, but that proves nothing: you can only really tell what a creature feeds on, as the seasons vary, by the contents of its stomach.

I will give a few of the favourite morsels of the heron. Eels, being a standing dish with him, must come first; after these the young of land and water birds, water rats, mice, frogs, fish of all sorts, shrimps, and small crabs. And if any little bunny happened to be dotting round a mole-hill—having come out of the burrow for the first time just to see how large the world was—when the heron was gliding near with his noiseless step, it would certainly never see its mother again.

Now our birds have neared the ferry, and that is the extent of their feeding ground; they will soon fly back into the marsh.

They are on wing. Very slowly they make headway, for the wind is against them, and they are low down. A shot is heard from the base of the sea wall close to a sluice. A great commotion follows, for the leading bird, a fine cock heron, is hit in one wing. He loses his balance at once, and drifts back on his companions. The others are alarmed, and for a moment there is a flapping and whirl of wings in dire confusion, the fierce wind huddling them up one on the other. It lasts only a few minutes;

they get clear and fly over the marsh in different directions. The wounded bird tries with all his might for a time to keep up, for he is only tipped; soon he begins to wobble and flap, and at last drops on the marsh. The shooter has a water spaniel with him; the dog has been intently watching the effect of the shot, and, seeing the bird drop, makes for it at once. The shooter tells me his dog is a young one, and his training is not yet finished. 'Come back, Nep! come back, Nep! Come back, I tell you! Ah, by Jove, he's got it! pretty hot, too; hear him yelp.' He had got it, and no mistake, for the bird, half raising himself on the ground with his sound wing and feet, had let drive as the dog rushed in to fix him. The first stroke, aimed at one of his eyes, missed, and took effect on the forehead, making a wound you could put the tip of your finger in. The second stroke crippled a foreleg, and the dog needed no more calling, but limped back to his master.

'Come here and let's see the mischief. Well, you've got something to remember this time. It's been a precious near squeak for you, Nep, but you'll get over it, and you'll not try to pick up a live Jack Hern again; you'll let 'em alone as long as you live, I'll warrant.'

The bird lay with crest raised, his long neck moving snake-like from side to side, and the feathers of the breast spread out, all ready to do battle. Walking up to him, the man said, 'No, you don't; not with me, at any rate; take that!' hitting him a crack on the head with the butt-end of his gun. The heron raised himself for a last stroke at his enemy's legs.

A keeper once said to me, 'No; I never lets a retriever pick up one o' they hungry varmint unless they're dead. If they only gets winged I give 'em a cut across the neck with a stick—a thundrin' good un, mind ye, and that settles 'em.'

'And what do you do with them then?' I asked.

'Nails 'em up on the side o' the old barn along o' the hawks an' the owls; because, don't ye see, in my mind they belongs to the birds o' prey; if they don't they ought to; they kills anything, and so I'll do for they.'

To have a stuffed heron is the ambition of many would-be gunners, to put in a case and to be able to say they shot it. One man I knew had a perfect craze for it, amounting in time to an attack of heron on the brain. Many were his plans and schemes to gain his desire. If you happened to mention you had

seen a heron you were buttonholed at once. 'Eh! what! Seen one? Why, bless my soul, where? Eh! Here, come and have a glass of something and tell me all about it. Ah, it's always the case; anybody can see 'em but me!'

A dozen could have been brought to him, but that would not do; he must shoot one himself. At last news reached him that a heron came regularly, night and morning, to a fishpond near a lonely farmhouse. 'Could he see it?' Certainly he could.

He went post-haste to the place, and sure enough up rose the bird. Over unlimited grog, and amidst the smoke puffed forth from long 'churchwardens,' the question 'how to get him' was discussed with the farm bailiff, who was a good-hearted fellow, and in comfortable circumstances.

Many plans were made and tried, but all failed. As a last resource it was suggested that this sportsman should have some kind of rough shelter made, and should watch for his heron all night, the bailiff, nothing loth, agreeing to sit up with him there till eleven o'clock, the moon being full and bright. A square dumpy bottle, holding a quart and hailing from Holland, together with some first-rate tobacco that had come with it, which the enthusiast had promised to supply, probably made the companionship a congenial one. Near midnight the bailiff took his departure, after shaking hands with our friend many times over, remarking as he did so that the moon twinkled a goodish bit, and things looked hazy round about. 'Steady does it, old boy, steady does it. When he comes, hold your powder straight an' knock him over. Steady does it, old boy. Good-night! Good-night!'

Early in the morning the heron passed overhead and settled on the opposite side of the small pond, almost in front of the sportsman. It ought not to have been very hard to hit the bird; but the contents of that queer-shaped bottle, or may be only the excitement of the moment, made his hand shake, and when his finger touched the trigger he only winged the coveted prize. Down went his gun, round the pond he rushed, and, not knowing the nature or tactics of the bird, he knelt down to pick him up. At the same moment the heron made one of its lightning-like strokes at one of his eyes. Luckily for him the bird's neck came in contact with his arm, spoiling the aim. As it was the bill cut a shallow furrow on the cheek-bone under the eye aimed at. Undaunted, he made a loop with one end of his handkerchief and placed it round the neck just below the head. The other end he tied round the heron's

legs. In fact, he haltered him. Then he tucked him under his arm like a goose, and picking up his gun, marched home, a proud and happy man, arriving just as the village folks were going in to breakfast. Seeing a friend coming down the street he exclaimed, 'I've got him!' 'I see you have; but what is that cut on your cheek?' replied the friend, adding, when he had been told how it occurred, 'Why, man alive! never do such a thing again; why, if that bird had made his stroke good, you would certainly have lost your eye, if not your life. You have had a very narrow escape.'

'Eh! what! bless me! you don't say so? Really now, dear me, dear me, eh!' Then, in a tone of voice evincing great determination, he said, 'I'm going to have him stuffed; expense no object.' The bird was stuffed, I have seen it many times; a wondrous work of art it is. The bird stands in a case about the size of a large clothes box, which is painted black outside and bright ultra-marine blue inside, in order to show him up well. At regular distances are tufts of flag three inches high. Close to his feet on the asphalt-looking gravel is a bit of stone tinted in many colours. Great efforts seem to have been made to give a natural effect to the whole, but, strange to say, the bird does not look happy; he squints for one thing, and he has the gout in his legs, for the wire used in the mysteries of stuffing would have supported a New Zealand emu.

But that matters not; the genial old fellow is happy, for he imagines nothing better, and his friends, to their credit be it spoken, have never undeceived him. When he invites them to his house, as he frequently does, to spend a sociable evening, at a certain point of the proceedings he invariably gives them for about the fiftieth time the account of his scuffle with that heron. It is so much enjoyed, that many go to sleep over it, but he does not observe it, for his eyes are fixed on the black box and its inmate—memory is busy with him, and it is very late.

On the wild moorlands you will find the heron close to the rills which have communication with the trout streams. An autumn evening is the time to look for him there, when the mists are rising from the low meadows and floating round the woods on the hill sides. Over the tops of the trees, which are in all their warm bright colouring, you will see him coming leisurely along. No sound is heard save the hoot of the brown owl; and, with the

exception of a woodman returning home after his day's work, there is no one to be seen. The air is so quiet that the distant slamming of a gate, the bark of a dog, and now and again the lowing of cattle in the distance falls on the ear with singular distinctness. The heron knows well the time best suited to him; slowly he flaps over the meadows, his form showing dim through the rising mists of evening. He does not settle yet; he has a recollection of a shot having been fired at him from the cover of the woods close by, when the shot knocked some feathers out of him, without further damage. 'Once bit, twice shy' is his motto now. Rising again he makes for the upland moor, where he has a good look out. It is not needed, for, with the exception of the owls, hooting out their jubilate, he will have no company unless another of his family joins him. Sometimes you will see two of them together, more rarely three, oftenest a solitary one. The moor rills are full of small trout about the size of gudgeon. If a fly tumbles into the water or rests on it, twenty rush for him at once. They will rush, too, for shelter in shoals when alarmed—in *droves* one might say. Just the size for Jack Hern they are, and he finds them a dainty morsel. No angler would take the trouble to catch these. So many mouths too, though small, require a great amount of food to fill them. You will not find a fish the size of a herring in the rills that run down from the moor. Besides which the bottom is peaty, and large trout do not run up to spawn there; they want a gravel bottom and a clean one for that. There is a certain amount of policy in allowing the heron to fish undisturbed in these rills. Better it is for him to visit the moor rills than the streams below where the trout are larger; for very few trout of a pound in weight and larger ever recover from a stroke made by the heron if they do manage to escape at the time. Some gentlemen, through whose property these little streams trickle, have made them wider in places, and formed ponds. Where this has been done the small moorland trout have vanished, you will not find one. Large trout have come in their place, much to the satisfaction of the gentlemen fishers, but not to that of the heron. The large fish give him more trouble, he is not able to fill his belly so quickly. All manner of destructive work is attributed to him, some of which he is quite innocent of. Such things as fish spears are made at home, in view of trout capture. Occasionally the fish will slip off one of these spears after being struck, and it is found dead or dying in the pond or stream. If that

intelligent person the keeper catches sight of it he exclaims, 'Them mischiefull varmint has been here agin, workin' the trout.' And so they have, but it was not the herons in this instance. Clever and quick as the bird is, he is not able to give three wounds at one stroke and all in a line. He will pick at a fish too large for him to swallow whole, but as a rule he feeds on the smaller fry. Necessity knows no law, however, and there is no reasoning with an empty stomach. When that troubles him he will fill it with the first food that presents itself. Anyone who has seen a mole hill heaving near the top of a hillock knows how the earth rises up and down and rolls down the sides. The heron knows the meaning of it, for he makes a dart and has the mole between his bill in an instant. This he will only do when very hard up for a meal; he is bound to have something then. Nearly all his food, however, is taken from the edge of the water or from shallow pools. He can swim but he never does that when fishing. His attitudes are varied, like his diet. The usually accepted position for him is standing with his head and neck drawn down on to the shoulders, with both feet on the ground or in the water, as the case may be. Though represented thus in most illustrations, you will find him so but rarely. His usual position is, neck held upright, head, bill, and body carried horizontally, one foot on the ground, the other just raised off it with the toes bent inwards. When the heron is after his prey, and moving, the head and neck are stretched out, and the body carried in a line with them. A curious-looking bird he is, when he squats down to rest; and he looks still more grotesque when standing, if seen from behind; after he has partaken of a good feed. His shoulders are lumped up and his head and bill are not visible, for they are sunk in his shoulders, the bill pointing a little downwards. But see him when and where you will, and in whatever position he may place himself, he is a most interesting bird to all true lovers of life in a state of nature, and must always command attention.

If a field has been ploughed and left fallow for a season anywhere near his haunts, he and his companions—if he chance to have any—are certain to visit it, for he is sure of safety and food there; but catch him within gunshot of the hedge or trees that surround it if you can. On the ploughed field he has a view all round him. The food he picks up there consists of plump field mice and frogs.

Speaking of frogs, it is generally supposed, and the supposition

is accepted, that the proper place to look for them is in or near the water. Excepting in spring, when all the shallow pools are well stocked with them, at spawning time, I have only found a very few, at rare intervals, near water; but never one of the kind which I have seen so often a long distance from it.

Reptiles have a great attraction for me, and, as far as our English ones are concerned, I have made close acquaintance with them all, and handled them freely—the viper not excepted.

It is possible that we have a variety of frog that has not been generally recognised; which is to be found in places supposed to be unlikely, I mean. The heron knows all about that matter. Large, bright, and plump fellows with beautiful eyes, their colour a warm Sienna yellow, spotted with warm brown spots. A kangaroo-like leap they have, and they conceal themselves under any tuft of grass or plant large enough to give them shelter—not haphazard fashion, but in regular homes. If you examine the place where one has sprung from, you will find the depression where the frog squatted; and if you catch sight of him before he springs you will see that his back is just on a level with the ground, and he is completely hidden by a plant or tuft of grass. A footstep will start him or make him move uneasily and betray his whereabouts.

Mice make their shallow runs and holes a few inches deep in the same locality; they are in first-rate condition, plump and sleek; you may see them running up the stems of different plants to get at the seeds, and then follow them to their holes. Other small things besides mice and frogs there are about the field frequented by our heron, but his attention is principally directed to these. Very few creatures in a wild state, furred or feathered, that are in the least carnivorous, can resist the temptation of making a meal of a mouse, or including it in one, whenever the chance offers.

Jack Hern nests rook-fashion in the trees, where these and the locality are suited to his taste. In some parts which are treeless, he will make a virtue of necessity and nest in the fern or stunted cover on some rock or island; for a bird of many resources is the common heron.

WORKING PRINCES.

VERILY the world owes a debt of gratitude to the old Duke Maximilian in Bavaria, if it be for nothing but the education he gave to his sons. It must be the result of their early training that two of these, Prince Ludwig and the Duke Karl Theodor, have been able to solve the problem, How, in this democratic age, can princes earn an honest livelihood? They have solved it simply and manfully, never forgetting the while that, by the old royal signification of their title, they must be the first, not to receive, but to render aid.

In the palace of Luxemburg there is a picture of the five elder children of Duke Maximilian, every one of whom, even at that early age—the eldest does not look more than fifteen—shows signs not only of great personal beauty but of intelligence of a most unusual order. It is impossible to look into the large, dark, earnest eyes they all possess, to note their mingled expression of wistfulness and reckless daring, and not feel that Nature herself has stamped them as something apart from ordinary, commonplace mortals. Enthusiasm and genius are written too plainly on their faces for them ever to be found among the crowd of those who patiently submit to the monotonous routine of every-day existence. Nor have their fortunes belied their faces. In the lives of each of those five there have been bright touches, vivid patches, episodes—tragic or comic as you may view them—such as rarely fall to the lot of princes. Caroline, the eldest and perhaps the most beautiful of the daughters, was, whilst still a child, selected as a fitting bride for the heir to the Austrian crown, and although there was no formal betrothal her father was informed that she must be educated in such a way as would fit her for her future grandeur. This was more easily said than done, for money was scarce in the ducal palace; but the whole family, from the Duke himself to his youngest child, seem to have thrown themselves *con amore* into the work, and to have cheerfully economised for the sake of the fortunate Caroline. She had professors and teachers of the best, and she well repaid all the care that was lavished upon her, for at nineteen, clever,

accomplished, and regally beautiful, she was the very ideal of what a queen should be. But

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley.

When the time for the marriage drew near, the young Emperor Joseph came on a visit to the Duke in Bavaria (the family title is 'in,' not 'of'), that he might make the acquaintance of his future wife. He gazed at the stately young creature who had been so carefully trained for him with respectful admiration, but he fell violently in love with her madcap younger sister, Elizabeth, who, regarded in the family as a mere child, and one, too, for whom no high destiny was in store, had been allowed to pass her days on horseback scouring the country-side. Ministers and courtiers stood aghast, but argument and persuasion were alike wasted on the Emperor, who refused to see that a lack of accomplishments was a blemish in the one whom he loved; and a few months later Elizabeth, thorough child as she was, knowing no more of the etiquette of courts than the veriest little *gamine*, entered Vienna in state, as Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary. Although this happened more than thirty years ago, she has not yet learnt to submit with patience to the restraints that hedge in the lives of sovereigns; and the Viennese, in spite of their love for their beautiful Empress, openly mourn that the Emperor should have chosen one who regards a court ball as a penance, and a state ceremony as a thing scarcely to be lived through. From the day of her marriage it seems to have been her constant endeavour to shake off the fetters of her station; and perhaps the happiest hours of her life are those in which, whilst following the hounds in England, or hunting the chamois in her native land, she is able to forget that she is Empress-Queen.

For her age, the Empress Elizabeth is the youngest-looking woman in Europe. When one sees her slight, graceful form, eyes brilliant with life and vigour, and complexion that flushes and pales with every passing emotion, it seems absurd that she should be the grandmother of big boys and girls.

Caroline, the forsaken one, seems to have met her fate with true royal equanimity. Perhaps she thought that as her sister gained what she lost it did not really matter. If one may judge by her face, her life has not been a happy one. When she was about four-and-twenty she was married to the Prince of Thurn and Taxis, who died some nine years later.

Marie Sophie, too, the youngest of the three sisters in the picture, has had her share of adventures. Married before she was eighteen to the Prince Royal of Naples, afterwards King Francis II., she was not destined long to wear a crown; and it is as ex-Queen, not as Queen, that we all think of her. If report be true, this winter she is going to try what hunting and horse-racing in England will do towards satisfying her craving for excitement.

It is in the sons, not the daughters, however, that the peculiar gifts of the family come most to the fore. The work Karl Theodor, Duke Maximilian's second son, is doing has already attracted no little attention in Europe. The veriest medical student whose life and bread depended upon his work never threw himself into the study of medicine with half the ardour of this young scion of royalty. When a boy, botany and chemistry were his favourite pursuits; and no sooner were his school-days over than he undertook medicine as a serious study, attending the lectures, going through the hospitals, and finally passing the examinations that qualified him to practise as a doctor. Nor did his work end here. Having chosen the eye as his speciality, he devoted some years to a careful study of the various theories concerning the treatment of the blind. This done, he travelled through Europe, seeking the advice and help of every oculist of special eminence in his profession; and it was only when he had learned from them all they could teach him that he returned to his palace at Tegern, where he established himself as a regular oculist. Anyone may consult him, his door stands open to all the world; the only difference between him and any other practitioner being that his rate of charges varies in direct ratio with the wealth of those who seek his aid. If he perform an operation for a rich man, the prince's fee is the same as that of any other doctor of equal skill, neither more nor less; if, however, the patient be one of those whose means do not allow of their indulging in such expensive luxuries as great doctors, well, he lowers his charges to what they can afford to pay; whilst, as for the poor—not merely mendicants, but officers with thirty pounds a year, civilians with perchance forty—all such as these Duke Karl Theodor not only attends without fee, but whilst they are under his care he receives them as guests, feeding and caring for them with the most kindly thoughtfulness.

Surely this is an ideal social arrangement! Other princes before now have received fees, but which of them ever rendered real honest value in return as Duke Karl Theodor is doing? The

old Duke's eldest son, Prince Ludwig, is in some respects more interesting even than Karl Theodor. He is now a man about fifty-five, tall and dark, with a haggard, care-worn face, the result of constant ill-health. There is a subtle resemblance, both in appearance and manner, between him and the well-known actor Mr. Henry Irving; one of the Prince's favourite gestures—the way he throws over his left shoulder the long military cloak he generally wears—might have been studied at the Lyceum.

When about four-and-twenty Prince Ludwig fell violently in love with a beautiful young actress who had just taken the world by storm, and insisted upon marrying her. But this could not be done without a terrible battle, for a hundred petty restrictions hem in the liberty of German princes; and although his father took no active steps to prevent the marriage, the King of Bavaria, his grandfather, opposed it most vehemently, and even the Emperor Joseph, in whom one might have thought the Prince would have found a stout ally, turned traitor, and declared one love-match in a family was enough.

But threats and entreaties were alike powerless to turn Prince Ludwig from his course; even the declaration that if he persisted he would forfeit his *majorat* failed to move him, and in 1857, in order that he might be able to marry the woman he loved so passionately, he cheerfully surrendered all his rights and allowed his younger brother, Karl Theodor (who did so most reluctantly and only under strong compulsion), to take his place as future head of the family.

The marriage seems to have proved a singularly happy one; to this day the Prince's manner to his wife, the Baroness von Wallersee, as she is styled, is more that of a lover than a middle-aged married man. She, too, unlike the generality of her profession, is a model wife, with a perfect genius for diffusing brightness and happiness around her. They have no children, and live for the greater part of the year in a simple suite of apartments at Bad-Kreuth—that strange anomaly, a lucrative business combined with a most generous charity—over which Prince Ludwig presides, a royally courteous and kindly host.

Bad-Kreuth, perhaps the most ancient of the Alpine health-resorts, consists of some half-dozen houses built by the side of a spring of mineral water, on an elevated plateau on the north-western side of the Hohlenstein, one of the higher Alps that form the boundary between Bavaria and the Tyrol. In 754 A.D. the

Burgundian Princes Adalbert and Otkar presented the valley of the Weissnach, in which it lies, to the Benedictine monks of Tegern, who were not long in discovering that the water in their new domain possessed strange, if not miraculous, qualities. They built a bath-house at Kreuth to which they used to send the invalids of their order. This building was accidentally burnt down in 1627, but a new one, larger and more commodious, replaced it; and the old monastic chronicle relates that in 1707 Abbot Quirinus IV. further enlarged the baths, built a chapel, 'and furnished these valuable healing-waters with special conveniences for his folks.' When, in 1803, the Benedictine Order at Tegern was suppressed, Bad-Kreuth passed into the hands of a farmer, who thought more of its fertile soil than of its healing-waters. Ten years later, however, King Max of Bavaria bought the land and laid the foundation of the present establishment. At his death it passed into the hands of his widow, Queen Caroline, from her to her son, and then to her grandson, Karl Theodor. But although he, as Duke in Bavaria, is the owner of Kreuth, the real moving spirit of the institution is his brother Prince Ludwig.

The whole of Bad-Kreuth—houses, spring, land, and everything you can see for miles around—belongs to the ducal family. The servants are theirs, and the entire management of the establishment is more or less under their immediate superintendence. For three months in the year—June, July, and August—Kreuth is simply a health-resort for Southern Germans, who engage their rooms, give their orders, and pay their bills as in any other hotel. These are the paying guests, and this is the Prince's harvest-time; for, as he is his own butcher, brewer, dairyman, and baker, after defraying all expenses a handsome surplus must remain to him. He does not profess that during these months his terms are lower than those of other hotels; the visitors are in the midst of exquisite scenery, have comfortable rooms, and are provided with dainty food: for these advantages they must pay; and it is only fair to add that for the additional luxury—the halo of royalty that is cast around them—they are not charged. During May and September the Duke will have none of these paying guests, but fills his house with what he calls his 'friends,' that is, with the people found everywhere, but nowhere in such quantities as in Germany—those who are too proud to ask for charity and who yet stand sorely in need of a little help. Officers who have nothing but their pay to depend upon, university students trying to combine

teaching and learning, poor professors, struggling literary men, artists who have got their way to make, failures of every shape and sort, all make their way to Kreuth. For two months in the year there are between two and three hundred of these visitors at the hotel, where they are all housed, tended, and fed as carefully as the wealthiest guests, and that, too, without it costing them one penny. Nor is it only at this time that the Prince's 'friends' are to be found at Kreuth; if, at the height of the season, a room is left vacant, some poor invalid is invited to occupy it, and you would never guess from the manner of the host or his servants that the new arrival was not a millionaire.

Kreuth hospitality does not even end here. There is one unpretentious house, standing a little apart from the rest, that is called Das Könighaus, and is reserved for the use of the royal family; but as the Bavarian princes never live in it they have made it into a kind of house of refuge for those poor little German princes and nobles, with their long pedigrees and empty purses, to whom an outing gratis is as welcome a boon as to their more plebeian fellows. Occasionally real kings and queens, attracted by the beauty of the surroundings and the marvellous purity of the air, spend a few weeks in Das Könighaus. The Empress of Austria and her youngest daughter are staying there now. During the summer I spent at Kreuth the King of Württemberg, the ex-Queen of Naples, the Princess Frederica of Hanover (who was entered in the list as Princess of Great Britain), and a score of other 'royalties' were there; but they seemed to have cast aside all thought of etiquette or rank, and mingled with the other guests on terms of the most friendly equality. The scarlet coat of the Princess Frederica's one attendant was the only sign of royalty I detected. To one and all, whether paying guest, royal visitor, or 'friend,' Prince Ludwig's manner is the same—that of a friendly, courteous host. He has the true royal gift of never forgetting a face or a name, and as he walks on the long covered terrace or in the grounds no one is overlooked; he has a kindly greeting, a sympathetic inquiry, a pleasant word, for each in turn.

It is strange that Bad-Kreuth should be so little known to English travellers, for it is certainly one of the most lovely of the Alpine health-resorts; and although, fortunately for those who stay there, it is off the tourists' highway, it is easy of access. The railway journey from Munich to Gmund, on the Tegern-See,

takes less than two hours, and Bad-Kreuth lies some eight miles beyond.

From Tegern-See, a large beautiful lake surrounded by tiny villages, the road winds up the valley of the Weissach, a river, or rather a raging, tearing torrent, which starts on its course high up in the Alps beyond Kreuth, and is soon joined by two other mountain streams—the Gerlosbach and the Klambach—which come dashing down the rocks, forming a thousand cascades, fountains, and waterfalls on their way; the three rush on together, always meeting other streams and dragging them along in their own wild race until they all reach the Tegern-See. The rugged heights of the Blaiberg shut in the valley on the south; on the east are the Walberg, Setzberg, and Rossstein—lofty forest-covered mountains; whilst on the west, the great conical Leonhardstein towers above the Raucheck and the Hirschberg. At the head of the valley, standing as it were under the shadow of the Blaiberg, is the Hohlenstein, which on its north-western side, at an elevation of nearly 3,000 feet, forms a terrace-like projection, so regular in form that at a first glance it seems impossible it should be the unaided work of nature. On this terrace is the sulphur-well to which the little health-resort owes its origin.

Bad-Kreuth lies in the region of meadows where the beech, birch, ash, silver fir, and pine flourish; the forests around being almost impenetrable from the Alpine honeysuckle and other shrubs that cling to the ground. A thousand feet higher, however, few trees are to be found with the exception of firs and pines, and soon even these become stunted and meagre, and the grey barren mountains are left without cover. It is curious how colour seems to vary with height. In the villages around Tegern-See the flowers are quite startling from their brilliancy; the huge beds of scarlet geraniums and pinks at Egern are almost overpowering on a hot summer day; but as you advance up the valley you soon lose sight of these, and their place is taken by the columbine, yellow violet, campanula, orchid, and fern, all of delicate colouring; and these in their turn must make way for the gentian-yellow, violet, and blue Alpine rose, nigritella, mountain forget-me-not, and yellow auricula; whilst in the higher crevices of the rocks, maidenhair and edelweiss flourish. Nor is the fauna of the Weissach Valley less varied than its flora. Although the bear and lynx are now unknown there, half a century

ago it was one of their favourite haunts; it is still no unusual sight, whilst breakfasting at Kreuth, to see a herd of chamois grazing on the Grüneck, and after nightfall stags and red deer may often be encountered in the woods; legends speak, too, of the golden eagles that are there, but it was not my luck to see them.

For the restless—those unhappy beings whose only conception of bliss is movement—Kreuth has another charm: it is a perfectly ideal centre for excursions. Not half a mile from the hotel is the highway from Bavaria into the Tyrol, from which roads and paths of every description branch off in all directions. The Tyroler road itself is well made and well kept, and passes through scenes of marvellous beauty. On this road, about seven miles from Kreuth, is the little hamlet of Glashütte, only a church and a few cottages now, but 800 years ago a flourishing industrial settlement. It was here that the good monks of Tegern had their glass-manufactory—perhaps the first in Germany—and the old chronicle says that ‘by the year 1005 their skilful hands could not execute all the orders they received. The Grosse Wolfschlucht, where the valley ends abruptly in an immense gloomy cavern, and the Kleine Wolfschlucht, a less majestic but more picturesque ravine, both offer charming expeditions. The Langenau, a lovely little valley that winds round the foot of the Hohlenstein; the Kaiserklause, where on St. Bartholomew’s Day the peasants, in their picturesque costumes, with zithers in their hands, hold their dances; and Tegern, with its old Benedictine abbey, are all within easy distances. A drive of thirteen miles brings you to Archensee, the largest lake in Northern Tyrol, in the midst of the wildest and most romantic scenery. After the bright flowers and green fields of Tegern, Archensee, with all its beauty, is certainly depressing. The high mountains which, rising sheer from the water-edge, tower above the lake seem to have a lowering, sinister aspect, as if the deities who dwell there view humanity with little favour. The heights, too, are hard and barren, and have lost those fantastic curves, points, and crevices which give such endless variety to the Hohlenstein and its neighbours.

Geisalp, Blauberg, Königsalp, Schildenstein, Halserspitz, Risserkogel, may all be ascended from Kreuth; but perhaps the finest panorama is obtained from the top of the Schinderberg, a mountain lying rather to the east. From there you see in the far

distance the mountains of Salzburg and Styria, the Gletscher Range, and the snow-covered Gross Glockner; near at hand the Blauberg, with its surface all worn and furrowed by the force of the rushing torrents that spring from its side, and the Allgäuer Alps, stretching up their heads above their neighbours; then, between the Leonhardstein and the Rossstein, is the Schwarzenbach-Thal, with the lovely Schwarze Tenne elm, and the valley in which the Weissach winds and twists as if in no hurry to reach the silvery Tegern. On all sides lofty mountains towering above forest-covered hills, shady valleys, barren peaks, foaming rivers, silvery streams, and tiny lakelets reflecting dark firs and pines: all these combine to render the view unequalled for variety and beauty.

As to all these natural beauties is added the attraction of a cordial royal welcome, and the chance of studying an interesting eleemosynary experiment, surely Bad-Kreuth is well worth a visit.

A LIFE'S MORNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'DEMOS,' 'THYRZA,' ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

THEIR SEVERAL WAYS.

As Wilfrid quitted the house, the gate was opened by Jessie Cartwright, who, accompanied by one of her sisters, was bringing Emily some fine grapes, purchased, in the Cartwright manner, without regard to expense. The girls naturally had their curiosity excited by the stranger of interesting, even of aristocratic, appearance, who, as he hurried by, cast at them a searching look.

'Now, who ever may that be?' murmured Jessie, as she approached the door.

'A doctor, I dare say,' was her sister's suggestion.

'A doctor! Not he indeed. He has something to do with Emily, depend upon it.'

The servant, opening to them, had to report that Miss Hood was too unwell to-day to receive visitors. Jessie would dearly have liked to ask who it was that apparently had been an exception, but even she lacked the assurance necessary to the putting of such a question. The girls left their offering, and went their way home; the stranger afforded matter for conversation throughout the walk.

Wilfrid did not go straight to the Baxendales'. In his distracted state, he felt it impossible to sit through luncheon, and he could not immediately decide how to meet Mrs. Baxendale, whether to take her into his confidence or to preserve silence on what had happened. He was not sure that he would be justified in disclosing the details of such an interview; did he not owe it to Emily to refrain from submitting her action to the judgment of any third person? If in truth she were still suffering from the effects of her illness, it was worse than unkind to repeat her words; if, on the other hand, her decision came of adequate motives, or such as her sound intelligence deemed adequate, was it possible to violate the confidence implied in such a conversation between her and himself? Till his mind had assumed some

degree of calmness, he could not trust himself to return to the house. Turning from the main road at a point just before the bridge over the river, he kept on the outskirts of the town, and continued walking till he had almost made the circuit of Dunfield. His speed was that of a man who hastened with some express object; his limbs seemed spurred to activity by the gallop of his thoughts. His reason would scarcely accept the evidence of consciousness that he had indeed just heard such things from Emily's lips; it was too monstrous for belief; a resolute incredulity sustained him beneath a blow which, could he have felt it to be meant in very earnest, would have deprived him of his senses. She did not, she could not, know what she had said! Yet she spoke with such cruel appearance of reasoning earnestness; was it possible for a diseased mind to assume so convincingly the modes of rational utterance? What conceivable circumstances could bring her to such a resolution? Her words: 'I do not love you,' made horrible repetition in his ears; it was as though he had heard her speak them again and again. *Could they be true?* The question, last outcome of the exercise of his imagination on the track of that unimaginable cause, brought him to a standstill, physically and mentally. Those words had at first scarcely engaged his thought; it was her request to be released that seriously concerned him; that falsehood had been added as a desperate means of gaining her end. Yet now, all other explanations in vain exhausted, perforce he gave heed to that hideous chime of memory. It was not her father's death that caused her illness; that she admitted. Had some horrible complication intervened, some incredible change come upon her since he left England? He shook off this suggestion as blasphemy. Emily? His high-souled Emily, upon whose faith he would stake the breath of his life? Was his own reason failing him?

Worn out, he reached the house in the middle of the afternoon, and went to his own sitting-room. Presently a servant came and asked whether he would take luncheon. He declined. Lying on the sofa, he still tormented himself with doubt whether he might speak with Mrs. Baxendale. That lady put an end to his hesitation by herself coming to his room. He sprang up.

'Don't move, don't move!' she exclaimed in her cheery way. 'I have only come to ask why you resolve to starve yourself. You can't have had lunch anywhere?'

'No; I am not hungry.'

'A headache?' she asked, looking at him with kind shrewdness.

'A little, perhaps.'

'Then at all events you will have tea. May I ask them to bring it here?'

She went away, and, a few minutes after her return, tea was brought.

'You found Emily looking sadly, I'm afraid,' she said, with one of the provincialisms which occasionally marked her language.

'Yes,' Wilfrid replied; 'she looked far too ill to be up.'

He had seated himself on the sofa. His hands would not hold the tea-cup steadily; he put it down by his side.

'I fear there is small chance of her getting much better in that house of illness,' said Mrs. Baxendale, observing his agitation. 'Can't we persuade her to go somewhere? Her mother is in excellent hands.'

I wish we could,' Wilfrid replied, clearly without much attention to his words.

'You didn't propose anything of the kind?'

He made no answer. A short silence intervened, and he felt there was no choice but to declare the truth.

'The meeting was a very painful one,' he began. 'It is difficult to speak to you about it. Do you think that she has perfectly recovered?—that her mind is wholly——'

He hesitated; it was dreadful to be speaking in this way of Emily. The sound of his voice reproached him; what words would not appear brutal in such a case?

'You fear——?'

Wilfrid rose and walked across the room. It seemed impossible to speak, yet equally so to keep his misery to himself.

'Mrs. Baxendale,' he said at length, 'I am perhaps doing a very wrong thing in telling you what passed between us, but I feel quite unable to decide upon any course without the aid of your judgment. I am in a terrible position. Either I must believe Emily to speak without responsibility, or something inexplicable, incredible, has come to pass. She has asked me to release her. She says that something has happened which makes it impossible for her ever to fulfil her promise, something which must always remain her secret, which I may not hope to understand. And with such dreadful appearance of sincerity—such a face of awful suffering——'

His voice failed. The grave concern on Mrs. Baxendale's visage was not encouraging.

'Something happened?' the latter repeated, in low-toned astonishment. 'Does she offer no kind of explanation?'

'None—none,' he added, 'that I can bring myself to believe.'

Mrs. Baxendale could only look at him questioningly.

'She said,' Wilfrid continued, pale with the effort it cost him to speak, 'that she has no longer any affection for me.'

There was another silence, of longer endurance than the last. Wilfrid was the first to break it.

'My reason for refusing to believe it is, that she said it when she had done her utmost to convince me of her earnestness in other ways, and said it in a way—— How is it possible for me to believe it? It is only two months since I saw her on the Castle Hill.'

'I thought you had never been here before?'

'I have never spoken to you of that. I came and left on the same day. It was to see her before I went to Switzerland.'

'I am at a loss,' said Mrs. Baxendale. 'I can only suggest that she has had a terrible shock, and that her recovery, or seeming recovery, has been too rapid. Yet there is no trace of wandering in her talk with me.'

'Nor was there to-day. She was perfectly rational. Think of one's being driven to hope that she only *seemed* so!'

'Did you speak of correspondence?'

'No. I said that I could not agree to what she asked of me until she had repeated it after a time. I left her scarcely knowing what I spoke. What shall I do? How can I remain in doubt such as this? I said I wished for your help, yet how can you—how can anyone—help me? Have I unconsciously been the cause of this?'

'Or has anyone else consciously been so?' asked the lady, with meaning.

'What? You think——? Is it possible?'

'You only hinted that your relatives were not altogether pleased.'

Wilfrid, a light of anger flashing from his eyes, walked rapidly the length of the room.

'She admitted to me,' he said, in a suppressed voice, 'that her illness began before her father's death. It was not that that caused it. You think that someone may have interfered? My

father? Impossible! He is a man of honour; he has written of her in the kindest way.'

But there was someone else. His father was honourable; could the same be said of Mrs. Rossall? He remembered his conversation with her on the lake of Thun; it had left an unpleasant impression on his mind—under the circumstances, explicable enough. Was his aunt capable of dastardly behaviour? The word could scarcely be applied to a woman's conduct, and the fact that it could not made disagreeably evident the latitude conceded to women in consideration of their being compelled to carry on warfare in underhand ways. Suppose an anonymous letter. Would not Mrs. Rossall regard that as a perfectly legitimate stratagem, if she had set her mind on resisting this marriage? Easy, infinitely easy was it to believe this, in comparison with any other explanation of Emily's behaviour. In his haste to seize on a credible solution of the difficulty, Wilfrid did not at first reflect that Emily was a very unlikely person to be influenced by such means, still more unlikely that she should keep such a thing secret from him. It must be remembered, however, that the ways of treachery are manifold, and the idea had only presented itself to his mind in the most indefinite form. As it was, it drove him almost to frenzy. He could not find a calm word, nor was it indeed possible to communicate to Mrs. Baxendale the suspicion which occupied him. She, watching him as he stood at a distance, all but forgot her anxious trouble in admiration of the splendid passion which had transformed his features. Wilfrid looked his best when thus stirred—his best, from a woman's point of view. The pale cast of thought was far from him; you saw the fiery nature asserting itself, and wondered in what direction these energies would at length find scope. Mrs. Baxendale, not exactly an impressionable woman, had a moment of absent-mindedness.

'Come here and sit down,' she said, the motherly insistence of the tone possibly revealing her former thought.

He threw himself on the couch.

'Of course,' she continued, 'this must remain between Emily and yourself; my own relations to her must be precisely as they have been, as if I had heard nothing. Now I think we may conclude that the poor girl is perfectly aware of what she is doing, but I no more than yourself believe her explanation. In some way she has come to regard it as a duty to abandon you. Let Emily once think it a duty, and she will go through with it if

it costs her life; so much I know of her; so much it is easy to know, if one has the habit of observing. May I advise you? Do not try to see her again, but write briefly, asking her whether the mystery she spoke of in any way connects itself with you. You will know how to put it so as to exact the answer you require. Suppose you write such a note at once; I will send it as soon as it is ready. You are in the torment of doubts; no misery as bad as that. Does this plan recommend itself to you?’

‘Yes; I will write.’

‘Then I will take myself off whilst you do so. Ring the bell and send for me as soon as you are ready. It is only half-past four; Emily will have your letter in an hour, and surely will reply at once.’

The letter was written, at greater length perhaps than was quite necessary, and Mrs. Baxendale speeded it on its way. Wilfrid begged that he might be excused from attendance at the dinner-table.

‘By all means,’ was Mrs. Baxendale’s reply. ‘The more so that we have politicians again, and I fear you would not be in the mood to make fun of them as you did the other night.’

‘Make fun of them? No, I was in earnest. I got interested in their subjects, and found I had more to say than I thought.’

‘Well, well; that is your politeness. Now lie down again, poor boy. But you must promise to eat what I send you; we have quite enough illness on our hands, remember.’

‘I may have the answer before then,’ Wilfrid said, moodily.

He had; it came in less than two hours from the messenger’s departure. He was alone when the servant brought it to him. Emily wrote:—

‘Wilfrid,—The change is in myself, in my heart, in my life. Nothing have I heard against you; nothing have I imagined against you; the influence of which I spoke is in no way connected with you. Let this, I implore you, be final. Forgive me, forgive me, that I seem to inflict pain on you so heedlessly. I act as I must; my purpose is unchangeable.’

Having been apprised of the messenger’s return, Mrs. Baxendale entered Wilfrid’s room as soon as she had dressed for dinner. He sat at the table, the letter lying open before him. As Mrs. Baxendale approached, he held the sheet to her.

‘Then my last conjecture is fruitless,’ she said, letting her hand fall. ‘We cannot doubt her word.’

'Doubt it? No. There is nothing for me but to believe all she said.'

He let his face fall upon his hands; the bitterness of fate was entering his inmost heart.

'No, no, you shall not give way,' said his friend, just touching his fingers. 'It all looks very sad and hopeless, but I will not believe it is hopeless. Refuse to believe that one worst thing, the only thing for which there is no remedy. Come, defy yourself to believe it! You are strong enough for that; there is manhood in you for anything that is worth bearing, however hard.'

He could not reply to her encouragement; who cannot devise words of exhortation? and what idler than such words when the heart agonises?

'Try and listen to me, Wilfrid. If I make you angry with me, it is better than abandoning yourself to despondency. I firmly believe that this is a matter which time will bring right. Emily is acting hastily; I am convinced of that. Time is on your side; try and accept him as a friend. We are not living in a novel; there are no such things as mysteries which last a lifetime. Your part is to draw upon all the manliness you own, to have faith in yourself, and to wait. Have faith in her, too; there are few like her; some day you will see that this only made her better worth winning.—Now answer me a question.'

Wilfrid raised his head.

'Do you not in your heart believe that she is incapable of folly or wrongheadedness?'

'I believe that no truer woman lives.'

'And rightly, be sure of it. Believing that, you know she cannot break her word to you without some reason which you would yourself say was good and sufficient. She imagines she has such a reason; imagines it in all sincerity. Time will show her that she has been in error, and she will confess it. She has all her faculties, no doubt, but a trial such as this leads her to see things in ways we cannot realise.'

'You forget that it is *not* this shock that has so affected her.'

'Wilfrid, remember that her father's death is itself mysterious. She may know more of what led to it than anyone else does. She may very well have foreseen it; it may have distracted her, the cause, whatever it was. She could not disclose anything—some secret, perhaps—that nearly concerned her father; you know how strong were the ties between them.'

Perhaps it was inevitable that a suggestion of this kind should ultimately offer itself. Wilfrid had not hit upon the idea, for he had from the first accepted without reflection the reasons for Hood's suicide which were accepted by everyone who spoke of the subject. Mrs. Baxendale only delivered herself of the thought in fervour of kindly-devised argument. She paused, reviewing it in her mind, but did not like to lay more stress upon it. Wilfrid, also thoughtful, kept silence.

'Now, there's the gong,' Mrs. Baxendale continued, 'and I shall have to go to the politicians. But I think I *have* given you a grain of comfort. Think of a prosy old woman inciting *you* to endure for the sake of the greatest prize you can aim at? Keep saying to yourself that Emily cannot do wrong; if she did say a word or two she didn't mean—well, well, we poor women! Go to bed early, and we'll talk again after breakfast to-morrow.'

She gave him her hand, and hurried away. Even in his wretchedness, Wilfrid could not but follow her with his eyes, and *feel* something like a blessing upon her strong and tender womanhood.

Fortunate fellow, who had laid behind him thus much of his earthly journey without one day of grave suffering. Ah, something he should have sacrificed to the envious gods, some lesser joy, that the essential happiness of his life might be spared him. Wilfrid had yet to learn that every sun which rises for us in untroubled sky is a portent of inevitable gloom, that nature only prolongs our holiday to make the journeywork of misery the harder to bear. He had enjoyed the way of his will from childhood upwards; he had come to regard himself as exempt from ill-fortune, even as he was exempt from the degradation of material need; all his doings had prospered, save in that little matter of his overtaxed health, and it had grown his habit to map the future with a generous hand, saying: Thus and thus will I take my conquering course. Knowing love for the first time, he had met with love in return, love to the height of his desire, and with a wave of the hand he had swept the trivial obstacles from his path. Now that the very sum of his exultant youth offered itself like a wine-cup to his lips, comes forth the mysterious hand and spills relentlessly that divine draught. See how he turns, with the blaze of royal indignation on his brow! Who of gods or men has dared thus to come between him and his bliss? He is not wont to be so thwarted; he demands that the cup shall be refilled

and brought again; only when mocking laughter echoes round him, when it is but too plain that the spirits no longer serve him, that where he most desires his power is least, does his resentment change by cold degrees to that chill anguish of the abandoned soul, which pays the debt of so many an hour of triumph. For the moment, words of kindness and sustaining hope might seem to avail him; but there is the night waiting in ambush for his weakness, that season of the sun's silence, when the body denuded of vestment typifies the spirit's exposure to its enemies. Let him live through his fate-imposed trial in that torture-chamber of ancient darkness. He will not come forth a better man, though perchance a wiser; wisdom and goodness are from of old at issue. Henceforth he will have eyes for many an ugly spot in his own nature, hidden till now by the veil of happiness. Do not pity him; congratulate him rather that the inevitable has been so long postponed.

He put on a bold face at breakfast next morning, for he could not suppose that Mrs. Baxendale would feel any obligation to keep his secret from her husband, and it was not in his character to play the knight of the dolorous visage. You saw the rings round his eyes, but he was able to discuss the latest electioneering intelligence, and even to utter one or two more of those shrewd remarks by which he had lately been proving that politics were not unlikely to demand more of his attention some day. But he was glad when he could get away to the drawing-room, to await Mrs. Baxendale's coming. He tried to read in a volume of Boswell which lay out; at other times the book was his delight, now it had the succulence of a piece of straw. He was in that state of mind when five minutes of waiting is intolerable. He had to wait some twenty before Mrs. Baxendale appeared. Only a clinging remnant of common-sense kept him from addressing her sourly. Wilfrid was not eminently patient.

'Well, what counsel has sleep brought?' she asked, speaking as if she had some other matter on her mind—as indeed she had—a slight difficulty which had just arisen with the cook.

'I should not be much advanced if I had depended upon sleep,' Wilfrid replied cheerlessly. Always sensitive, he was especially so at this moment, and the lady seemed to him unsympathetic. He should have allowed for the hour; matters involving sentiment should never be touched till the day has

grown to ripeness. The first thing in the morning a poet is capable of mathematics.

'I fear you are not the only one who has not slept,' said Mrs. Baxendale.

Wilfrid, after waiting in vain, went on in a tone very strange to him :

'I don't know what to do; I am incapable of thought. Another night like the last will drive me mad. You tell me I must merely wait; but I cannot be passive. What help is there? How can I kill the time?'

Mrs. Baxendale was visibly harder than on the previous evening. A half-smile caused her to draw in her lips; she played with the watch-chain at her girdle.

'I fear,' she said, 'we have done all that can be done. Naturally you would find it intolerable to linger here.'

'I must return to London?'

'Under any other circumstances I should be the last to wish it, but I suppose it is better that you should.'

He was prepared for the advice, but unreason strove in him desperately against the facts of the situation. It was this impotent quarrel with necessity which robbed him of his natural initiative and made Mrs. Baxendale wonder at his unexpected feebleness. To him it seemed something to stand his ground even for a few minutes. He could have eased himself with angry speech. Remember that he had not slept, and that his mind was sore with the adversary's blows.

'I understand your reluctance,' Mrs. Baxendale pursued. 'It's like a surrendering of hope. But you know what I said last night; I could only repeat the same things now. Don't be afraid; I will not.'

'Yes,' he murmured, 'I must go to London.'

'It would be far worse if you had no friend here. You shall hear from me constantly. You have an assurance that the poor thing can't run away.'

In the expressive vulgar phrase, Wilfrid 'shook himself together.' He began to perceive that his attitude lacked dignity; even in our misery we cannot bear to appear ignoble.

'I will leave you to-day,' he said, more like his old self. 'But there are other things that we must speak of. What of Emily's practical position?'

'I don't think we need trouble about that. Mr. Baxendale

tells me he has no doubt that the house in Barnhill can be sold at all events for a sum that will leave them at ease for the present. As soon as Mrs. Hood gets better, they must both go away. You can trust me to do what can be done.'

'It is my fear that Emily will find it difficult to accept your kindness.'

'It will require tact. Only experience can show what my course must be.'

'I sincerely hope the house *will* be sold. Otherwise, the outlook is deplorable.'

'I assure you it will be. My husband does not give up anything he has once put his hand to.'

'I shall keep my own counsel at home,' Wilfrid said.

'Do so, certainly. And you will return to Oxford?'

'I think so. I shall find it easier to live there—if, indeed, I can live anywhere.'

'I had rather you hadn't added that,' said Mrs. Baxendale with good-natured reproof. 'You know that you will only work the harder just to forget your trouble. That, depend upon it, is the only way of killing the time, as you said; if we strike at him in other ways we only succeed in making him angry.'

'Another apophthegm,' said Wilfrid, with an attempt at brightness. 'You are the first woman I have known who has that gift of neatness in speech.'

'And you are the first man who ever had discernment enough to compliment me on it. After that, do you think I shall desert your cause?'

Wilfrid made his preparations forthwith, and decided upon a train early in the afternoon. At luncheon, Mr. Baxendale was full of good-natured regrets that his visit could not be prolonged till the time of the election—now very near.

'When your constituents have sent you to Westminster,' said Wilfrid, 'I hope you will come and report to me the details of the fight?'

So he covered his retreat and retrieved in Mrs. Baxendale's eyes his weakness of the morning. She took him to the station in her brougham, but did not go on to the platform. Their parting was very like that of lovers, for it ended with mutual promises to 'write often.' Mrs. Baxendale was down-hearted as she drove home—in her a most unusual thing.

Two days later she went to Banbrigg, carrying the satisfactory

news that at last a sale of the Barnhill property had been negotiated. To Emily this intelligence gave extreme relief; it restored her independence. Having this subject to speak of made the meeting easier on both sides than it could otherwise have been. Emily was restlessly anxious to take upon herself the task of nursing her mother; with the maid to help her, she declared herself able to bear all responsibilities, and persisted so strongly that Mrs. Baxendale had no choice but to assent to the nurse who had remained being withdrawn. She could understand the need of activity which possessed the girl, but had grave fears of the result of an undertaking so disproportioned to her strength.

'Will you promise me,' she said, 'to give it up and get help if you find it is trying you excessively?'

'Yes,' Emily replied, 'I will promise that. But I know I shall be better for the occupation.'

'And you will let me still come and see you frequently?'

'I should miss you very much if you ceased to,' was Emily's answer.

Both felt that a difficulty had been surmounted, though they looked at it from different sides.

October passed, and the first half of November. Mrs. Hood had not risen from her bed, and there seemed slight chance that she ever would; she was sinking into hopeless imbecility. Emily's task in that sick-room was one which a hospital nurse would have found it burdensome to support; she bore it without a sign of weariness or of failure in physical strength. Incessant companionship with bodily disease was the least oppressive of her burdens; the state of her mother's mind afflicted her far more. Occasionally the invalid would appear in full possession of her intellect, and those were the hardest days; at such times she was incessantly querulous; hours long she lay and poured forth complaints and reproaches. When she could speak no more for very weariness, she moaned and wept, till Emily also found it impossible to check the tears which came of the extremity of her compassion. The girl was superhuman in her patience; never did she speak a word which was not of perfect gentleness; the bitterest misery seemed but to augment the tenderness of her devotion. Scarcely was there an hour of the day or night that she could claim for herself; whilst it was daylight she tended the sufferer ceaselessly, and her bed was in the same room, so that it often happened that she lay down only to rise before she could sleep. Her task was lighter

when her mother's mind strayed from the present ; but even then Mrs. Hood talked constantly, and was irritated if Emily failed in attention. The usual subject was her happiness in the days before her marriage ; she would revive memories of her school, give long accounts of her pupils, even speak of proposals of marriage which she had had the pleasure of declining. At no time did she refer to Hood's death, but often enough she uttered lamentations over the hardships in which her marriage had resulted, and compared her lot with what it might have been if she had chosen this or that other man. Emily was pained unspeakably by this revelation of her mother's nature, for she knew that it was idle to explain such tendencies of thought as the effect of disease ; it was, in truth, only the emphasizing of the faults she had always found it so hard to bear with. She could not understand the absence of a single note of affection or sorrow in all these utterances, and the fact was indeed strange, bearing in mind Mrs. Hood's outburst of loving grief when her husband was brought home, and the devotedness she had shown throughout Emily's illness. Were the selfish habits of years too strong for those better instincts which had never found indulgence till stirred by the supreme shock ? Thinking over the problem in infinite sadness, this was the interpretation with which Emily had to satisfy herself, and she saw in it the most dreadful punishment which a life-long fault could have entailed.

Though to her mother so sublimely forbearing, in her heart she knew too well the bitterness of revolt against nature's cruelty ; her own causes of suffering became almost insignificant in her view of the tragedy of life. Was not this calamity upon her surviving parent again a result of her own action ? Was it possible to avoid a comparison between this blasted home and the appearance it might at this moment have presented if she had sacrificed herself ? What crime had she ever been guilty of that such expiation could be demanded of her ? She mocked at her misery for so questioning ; as if causes and effects were to be thus discerned in fate's dealings. Emily had never known the phase of faith which finds comfort in the confession of native corruptness, nor did the desolation of her life guide her into that orthodox form of pessimism. She was not conscious of impurity, and her healthy human intelligence could only see injustice in the woe that had befallen her. From her childhood up she had striven towards the light, had loved all that is beautiful, had

worshipped righteousness; out of this had it issued that her life was sunk in woe unfathomable, hopeless of rescue for ever. She was the sacrifice of others' wrong-doing; the evil-heartedness of one man, the thoughtless error of another, had brought this upon her.

Her character, like the elemental forces of earth, converted to beneficent energy the burden of corruption thrust upon it. Active at first because she dreaded the self-communings of idleness, she found in her labour and her endurance sources of stern inspiration; her indestructible idealism grasped at the core of spiritual beauty in a life even such as this. She did not reason with herself hysterically of evil passions to be purified by asceticism, of mysterious iniquities to be washed out in her very life's blood; but the great principles of devotion and renunciation became soothing and exalting presences, before which the details of her daily task lost their toilsome or revolting aspect in a hallowed purpose. Her work was a work of piety, not only to the living, but to the beloved dead. If her father could know of what she was now doing, he would be comforted by it; if he knew that she did it for his sake it would bring him happiness. This truth she saw: that though life be stripped of every outward charm there may yet remain in the heart of it, like a glorious light, that which is the source of all beauty—Love. She strove to make Love the essence of her being. Her mother, whom it was so hard to cherish for her own sake, she would and could love because her father had done so; that father, whose only existence now was in her own, she loved with fervour which seemed to grow daily. Supreme, fostered by these other affections, exalted by the absence of a single hope for self, reigned the first and last love of her woman-soul. Every hard task achieved for love's sake rendered her in thought more worthy of him whom she made the ideal man. He would never know of the passion which she perfected to be her eternal support; but, as there is a sense of sweetness in the thought that we may be held dear by some who can neither come near us nor make known to us their good-will, so did it seem to Emily that from her love would go forth a secret influence, and that Wilfrid, all unknowing, would be blest by her faithfulness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A COMPACT.

On the last day of the year, a Sunday, Dagworthy sat by his fireside, alone; luncheon had been removed, and decanters stood within his reach. But the glass of wine which he had poured out, on turning to the fire half an hour ago, was still untasted, the cigar, of which he had cut the end, was still between his fingers, unlighted. For the last three months our friend had not lacked matter for thought; to do him justice, he had exercised his mind upon it pretty constantly. To-day he had received news which gave a fresh impulse to his rumination.

Dagworthy had never, since the years of early manhood, cared much for any of the various kinds of society open to him in Dunfield, and his failure to show himself at the houses of his acquaintance for weeks together occasioned no comment; but during these past three months he had held so persistently aloof that people had at length begun to ask for an explanation. At all events, when the end of the political turmoil gave them leisure to think of minor matters once more. The triumphant return of Mr. Baxendale had naturally led to festive occasions; at one dinner at the Baxendales' house Dagworthy was present, but, as it seemed, in the body only. People who, in the provincial way, made old jokes last a very long time, remarked to each other with a smile that Dagworthy appeared to be in a mood which promised an item of interest in the police reports before long. One person there was who had special reason for observing him closely that evening, and even for inducing him to converse on certain subjects; this was Mrs. Baxendale. A day or two previously she had heard a singular story from a friend of hers, which occupied her thought not a little. It interested her to discover how Dagworthy would speak of the Hood family, if led to that topic. He did not seem to care to dwell upon it, and the lady, after her experiment, imagined that it had not been made altogether in vain.

With that exception Dagworthy had kept to his mill and his house. It was seldom that he had a visitor, and those persons who did call could hardly feel that they were desired to come again. Mrs. Jenkins, of the Doric tongue, ruled in the household, and had but brief interviews with her master; provided

that his meals were served at the proper time, Dagworthy cared to inquire into nothing that went on—outside his kennels—and even those he visited in a sullen way. His child he scarcely saw; Mrs. Jenkins discovered that to bring the ‘barn’ into its father’s presence was a sure occasion of wrath, so the son and heir took lessons in his native tongue from the housekeeper and her dependents, and profited by their instruction. Dagworthy never inquired about the boy’s health. Once when Mrs. Jenkins, alarmed by certain symptoms of infantine disorder, ventured to enter the dining-room and broach the subject, her master’s reply was: ‘Send for the doctor then, can’t you?’ He had formerly made a sort of plaything of the child when in the mood for it; now he was not merely indifferent—the sight of the boy angered him. His return home was a signal for the closing of all doors between his room and the remote nursery. Once, when he heard crying he had summoned Mrs. Jenkins. ‘If you can’t stop that noise,’ he said, ‘or keep it out of my hearing, I’ll send the child to be taken care of in Hebsworth, or somewhere else further off, and then I’ll shut up the house and send you all about your business. So just mind what I say.’

Of late it had become known that he was about to take a partner into his business, a member of the Legge family—a name we remember. Dunfieldians discussed the news, and revived their pleasure in speculating on the sum total of Dagworthy’s fortune. But it was as one talks of possible mines of treasure in the moon; practical interest in the question could scarcely be said to exist, for the chance of Dagworthy’s remarriage seemed remoter than ever. The man was beginning to be one of those figures about whom gathers the peculiar air of mystery which ultimately leads to the creation of myths. Let him live on in this way for another twenty years, and stories would be told of him to children in the nursery. The case of assault and battery, a thing of the far past, would probably develop into a fable of manslaughter, of murder; his wife’s death was already regarded very much in that light, and would class him with Bluebeard; his house on the Heath would assume a forbidding aspect, and dread whispers would be exchanged of what went on there under the shadow of night. Was it not already beginning to be remarked by his neighbours that you met him wandering about lonely places at unholy hours, and that he shunned you, like one with a guilty conscience? Let him advance in years, his face lose its broad

colour, his hair grow scant and grey, his figure, perchance, stoop a little, his eyes acquire the malignity of miserly old age—and there you have the hero of a Dunfield legend. Even thus do such grow. . . .

But he is sitting by his fireside this New Year's Eve, still a young man, still fresh-coloured, only looking tired and lonely, and, in fact, meditating an attempt to recover his interest in life. He had admitted a partner to his business chiefly that he might be free to quit Yorkshire for a time, and at present he was settling affairs to that end. This afternoon he expected a visit from Mr. Cartwright, who had been serving him in several ways of late, and who had promised to come and talk business for an hour. The day was anything but cheerful; at times a stray flake of snow hissed upon the fire; already, at three o'clock, shadows were invading the room.

He heard a knock at the front door, and, supposing it to be Cartwright, roused himself. As he was stirring the fire a servant announced—instead of the father, the daughter. Jessie Cartwright appeared.

'Something amiss with your father?' Dagworthy asked, shaking hands with her carelessly.

'Yes; I'm sorry to say he has such a very bad sore-throat that he couldn't possibly come. Oh, what an afternoon it is, to be sure!'

'Why did *you* come?' was Dagworthy's not very polite inquiry. 'It wasn't so important as all that. Walked all the way?'

'Of course. I'm afraid the wet 'll drip off my cloak on to the floor.'

'Take it off, then, and put it here by the fire to dry.'

He helped her to divest herself, and hung the cloak on the back of a chair.

'You may as well sit down. Shall I give you a glass of wine?'

'Oh, indeed, no! No, thank you!'

'I think you'd better have one,' he said, without heeding her. 'I suppose you've got your feet wet? I can't very well ask you to take your shoes off.'

'Oh, they're not wet anything to speak of,' said Jessie, settling herself in a chair, as if her visit were the most ordinary event. She watched him pour the wine, putting on the face of a child

who is going to be treated to something reserved for grown-up persons.

'What do they mean by sending you all this distance in such weather?' Dagworthy said, as he seated himself and extended his legs, resting an elbow on the table.

'They didn't send me. I offered to come, and mother wouldn't hear of it.'

'Well——?'

'Oh, I just slipped out of the room, and was off before any one could get after me. I suppose I shall catch it rarely when I get back. But we wanted to know why you haven't been to see us—not even on Christmas Day.' Now that, you know, was too bad of you, Mr. Dagworthy. I said you must be ill. Have you been?'

'Ill? No.'

'Oh!' the girl exclaimed, upon a sudden thought. 'That reminds me. I really believe Mrs. Hood is dead; at all events all the blinds were down as I came past.'

'Yes,' was the reply, 'she is dead. She died early this morning.'

'Well, I never! Isn't poor Emily having a shocking Christmas! I declare, when I saw her last week, she looked like a ghost, and worse.'

Dagworthy gazed at the fire, and said nothing.

'One can't be sorry that it's over,' Jessie went on, 'only it's so dreadful, her father and mother dead almost at the same time. I'm sure it would have killed me.'

'What is she going to do?' Dagworthy asked, slowly, almost as if speaking to himself.

'Oh, I daresay it'll be all right, as soon as she gets over it, you know. She's a lucky girl, in one way.'

'Lucky?' He raised his head to regard her. 'How?'

'Oh well, that isn't a thing to talk about. And then I don't know anything for certain. It's only what people say, you know.'

'What do people say?' he asked, impatiently, though without much sign of active interest. It was rather as if her manner annoyed him, than the subject of which she spoke.

'I don't see that it can interest you.'

'No, I don't see that it can. Still, you may as well explain.' Jessie sipped her wine.

'It's only that they say she's engaged.'

'To whom?'

'A gentleman in London—somebody in the family where she was teaching.'

'How do you know that?' he asked, with the same blending of indifference and annoyed persistency.

'Why, it's only a guess, after all. One day Barbara and I went to see her, and just as we got to the door, out comes a gentleman we'd never seen before. Of course, we wondered who he was. The next day mother and I were in the station, buying a newspaper, and there was the same gentleman, just going to start by the London train. Mother remembered she'd seen him walking with Mrs. Baxendale in St. Luke's, and then we found he'd been staying with the Baxendales all through Emily's illness.'

'How did you find it out? You don't know the Baxendales.'

'No, but Mrs. Gadd does, and she told us.'

'What's his name?'

'Mr. Athel—a queer name, isn't it?'

Dagworthy was silent.

'Now you're cross with me,' Jessie exclaimed. 'You'll tell me, like you did once before, that I'm no good but to pry into other people's business.'

'You may pry as much as you like,' was the murmured reply.

'Just because you don't care what I do?'

'Drink your wine, and try to be quiet just for a little.'

'Why?'

He made no answer, until Jessie asked—

'Why does it seem to interest you so much?'

'What?—all that stuff you've been telling me? I was thinking of something quite different.'

'Oh!' exclaimed the girl, blankly.

There was a longer silence. Jessie let her eyes stray about the room, stealing a glance at Dagworthy occasionally. Presently he rose, poked the fire with violence, and drank his own wine, which had been waiting so long.

'I must have out the carriage to send you back,' he said, going to the window to look at the foul weather.

'The carriage, indeed!' protested the girl, with a secret joy. 'You'll do no such thing.'

'I suppose I shall do as I choose,' he remarked, quietly. Then he came and rang the bell.

'You're not really going to——?'

A servant answered, and the carriage was ordered.

'Well, certainly that's one way of getting rid of me,' Jessie observed.

'You can stay as long as you please.'

'But the carriage will be round.'

'Can't I keep it waiting half through the night if I choose? I've done so before now. I suppose I'm master in my own house.'

It was strictly true, that, of the carriage. Once the coachman had been five minutes late on an evening when Dagworthy happened to be ill-tempered. He bade the man wait at the door, and the waiting lasted through several hours.

The room was growing dusk.

'Aren't you very lonely here?' Jessie asked, an indescribable change in her voice.

'Yes, I suppose I am. You won't make it any better by telling me so.'

'I feel sorry.'

'I dare say you do.'

'Of course you don't believe me. All the same, I *do* feel sorry.'

'That won't help.'

'No?—I suppose it won't.'

The words were breathed out on a sigh. Dagworthy made no answer.

'I'm not much better off,' she continued, in a low-spirited voice.

'Nonsense!' he ejaculated, roughly, half turning his back on her.

Jessie fumbled a moment at her dress; then, succeeding in getting her handkerchief out, began to press it against her eyes furtively. Strangely, there was real moisture to be removed.

'What's the matter with you?' Dagworthy asked, with surprise.

She no longer attempted concealment, but began to cry quietly.

'What the deuce has come to you, Jessie?'

'You—you—speak very unkindly to me,' she sobbed.

'Speak unkindly? I didn't know it. What did I say?'

'You won't believe when I say I'm sorry you feel lonely.'

'Why, confound it, I'll believe as much as you like, if it comes to that. Put that handkerchief away, and drink another glass of wine.'

She stood up, and went to lean on the mantelpiece, hiding her face. When he was near her again, she continued her complaints in a low voice.

'It's so miserable at home. They want me to be a teacher, and how can I? I never pretended to be clever, and if I'd all the lessons under the sun, I should never be able to teach French—and arithmetic—and those things. But I wish I could; then I should get away from home, and see new people. There's nobody I care to see in Dunfield—nobody but one——'

She stopped on a sob.

'Who's that?' Dagworthy asked, looking at her with a singular expression, from head to foot.

She made no answer, but sobbed again.

'What Christmas presents have you had?' was his next question, irrelevant enough apparently.

'Oh, none—none to speak of—a few little things. What do I care for presents? You can't live on presents.'

'Can't live on them? Are things bad at home?'

'I didn't mean that. But of course they're bad; they're always bad nowadays. However, Barbara's going to be married in a week; she'll be one out of the way. And of course I haven't a dress fit to be seen in for the wedding.'

'Why then, get a dress. How much will it cost?' He went to a writing-table, unlocked a drawer, and took out a cheque-book. 'Now then,' he said, half jestingly, half in earnest, 'what is it to be? Anything you like to say—I'll write it.'

'As if I wanted money!'

'I can give you that. I don't see what else I can do. It isn't to be despised.'

'No, you can do nothing else,' she said, pressing each cheek with her handkerchief before putting it away. 'Will you help me on with my cloak, Mr. Dagworthy?'

He took it from the chair, and held it for her. Jessie, as if by accident, approached her face to his hand, and, before he saw her purpose, kissed his hard fingers. Then she turned away, hiding her face.

Dagworthy dropped the garment, and stood looking at her. He had a half contemptuous smile on his lips. At this moment it was announced that the carriage was coming round. Jessie caught at her cloak, and threw it over her shoulders. Then, with sunk head, she offered to shake hands.

'No use, Jessie,' Dagworthy remarked quietly, without answering her gesture.

'Of course, I know it's no use,' she said in a hurried voice of shame. 'I know it as well as you can tell me. I wish I'd never come.'

'But you don't act badly,' he continued.

'What do you mean?' she exclaimed, indignation helping her to raise her eyes for a moment. 'I'm not acting.'

'You don't mean anything by it—that's all.'

'No, perhaps not. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye. I'm going away before very long. I dare say I shan't see you again before then.'

'Where are you going to?'

'Abroad.'

'I suppose you'll bring back a foreign wife,' she said with sad scornfulness.

'No, I'm not likely to do that. I shouldn't wonder if I'm away for some time, though—perhaps a couple of years.'

'Years!' she exclaimed in astonishment.

He laughed.

'That startles you. I shan't be back in time for your wedding, you see.'

She sobbed again, averting her face.

'I shan't ever be married. I'm one of those wretched things nobody ever cares for.'

'You'll have to show you deserve it. Why, you couldn't give your word and keep it for two years.'

Through this extraordinary scene Dagworthy was utterly unlike himself. It was as if a man suffering physical agony should suddenly begin to jest and utter wild mirth; there was the same unreality in his behaviour. Throughout it all the lines of his face never lost their impress of gloom. Misery had its clutch upon him, and he was driven by an inexplicable spirit of self-mockery to burlesque the subject of his unhappiness. He had no sense of responsibility, and certain instincts were strongly excited, making a kind of moral intoxication.

Jessie answered his question with wide eyes.

'I couldn't?—Ah!'

She spoke under her breath, and with sincerity which was not a little amusing.

'It's New Year's Eve, isn't it?' Dagworthy pursued, throwing

out his words at random. 'Be here this day two years—or not, as you like. I'm going to wander about, but I shall be here on that day—that is, if I'm alive. You won't, though. Good-bye.'

He turned away from her, and went to the window. Jessie moved a little nearer.

'Do you mean that?' she asked.

'Mean it?' he repeated, 'why, yes, as much as I mean anything. Be off; you're keeping that poor devil in the snow.'

'Mr. Dagworthy, I shall be here, and you daren't pretend to forget, or to say you weren't in earnest.'

He laughed and waved his hand.

'Be off to your carriage!'

Jessie moved to the door reluctantly; but he did not turn again, and she departed.

(To be continued.)

